

Apprehending (Scottish) Politics

**An anthropological study of local politics and Conservative
Party activism in Dumfries and Galloway 2001-2003**

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Declaration

‘I hereby declare that, except where indicated, I have composed this thesis in its entirety and that, except as specified, this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.’

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of local political activism, electioneering and political 'change' in Dumfries and Galloway, in the rural southwest of Scotland. Based on eighteen months of fieldwork conducted during 2001-2003, it builds on – and contributes to – recent scholarship on the anthropology of modern knowledge practices by focusing on a predicament paralleled in the work of the anthropologist and the would-be political activist in Scotland: where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge? I explore this predicament in relation to two political 'events' that helped focus the efforts of political activists across the region. The first was a public inquiry that the Boundary Commission for Scotland held in Dumfries on 14-15 November 2002, which was convened in response to strong local opposition to controversial proposals to re-draw local electoral boundaries as required by the Scotland Act 1998. Virtually alone in supporting these proposals, local Tories were amongst the dozens of activists for whom this inquiry became a focal point for action during 2002. It therefore provides a fascinating account of how political activists grappled with what often seemed a constantly changing – and utterly confusing – political landscape in which differentiating the 'new' and the 'different' from what was once 'business as usual' could not be taken for granted.

The second 'event' was the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections held on 1 May 2003. For several months, preparations for these elections dominated the agenda of local Tories, who generally believed that the Conservative Party was engaged in a struggle for electoral survival in the 'new' political landscape of post-devolution Scotland. Following the 1997 General Election in which the Scottish Conservatives lost every one of the eleven Westminster constituencies won in 1992 – including the previously 'safe' Dumfries constituency and the neighbouring seat of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale – their efforts locally drew on a much-diminished base of support. Most local Tory strategists worked from the assumption that they had endured their own, quite literal 'crisis' in representation, the material consequences of which entailed losses of financial and other resources, legitimacy and local knowledge. This study therefore analyses how local Conservatives attempted to address this crisis as they organised to contest the 2003 Scottish and local elections.

The marginal location of Tory Party activists in Scotland institutionally may not be unrelated to the fact that where they do appear 'strong' locally they are to be found at the geographical periphery, in places like Dumfries and Galloway. One unanswered question in this thesis remains whether the marginal status of my ethnographic subjects is a condition of their geographical and/or institutional location, or whether in fact others located closer to the political 'centre' share their experiences of activism as well? This question is important when one recognises that to the ethnographic subjects of my study, much political activism seemed like 'business as usual'; the activities in which they engaged that were 'new' or 'different' were not self-evidently so. Both the political activist and the anthropologist had to strain themselves to make novelty and differences appear.

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Prologue

Chapter One

Apprehending (Scottish) politics

Devolution and political 'change' in Dumfries and Galloway

This thesis is a study of local political activism, electioneering and political 'change' in Dumfries and Galloway, which is located in the rural southwest of Scotland (see Figures 1 and 2), during a period in Scottish history of great political and constitutional upheaval. Based on fieldwork that was conducted between September 2001 and July 2003, it follows the efforts of local Conservative Party activists in particular as they organised in the run-up to elections for the Scottish Parliament and the local Council. Held on 1 May 2003, these were the first elections to take place after the (re-) opening of the Scottish Parliament in July 1999. On one level, this thesis is a contribution to the sub-discipline of political anthropology¹. More importantly, however, in following the exploits of local Conservatives, it builds on – and contributes to – recent scholarship on the anthropology of modern knowledge practices (e.g. Coutin 2005; Dahl 2004; Jean-Klein 2000, 2002, 2003; Levine 2004; Maurer 2002, 2005; Miyazaki 2003, 2004; Miyazaki and Riles n.d.; Riles 1996, 1998, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005; Strathern 1995b, 1999, 2000) by focusing on a predicament paralleled in the work of the anthropologist and the would-be political activist in Scotland: where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge?

¹ For an introduction to the sub-discipline of political anthropology and its development over the last fifty years, see Seaton et al (1979), Swart et al (1966) and Vincent (2002).

When I began my fieldwork on the impact of devolution and political change in Dumfries and Galloway, I had wanted to foreground the following questions: How is political knowledge produced locally in the complex institutional context of post-devolution Scotland? How is such knowledge used in the making and validation of rival political claims? And how do anthropologists situate themselves – ethically, politically and theoretically – in relation to such claims? I arrived in my field site shortly after the devastating Foot and Mouth outbreak – one of the first major crises to confront the new Scottish Parliament. This epidemic had inflicted considerable damage on the local economy in a peripheral region of Scotland where less than 150,000 people reside² and, in its aftermath, I encountered a political landscape cluttered with competing political claims and half-won skirmishes.

Drawn into a world of words, discourse and documents, I became interested in those practices that produced for political activists the kind of knowledge that was considered ‘relevant’ to forming a basis for political action, such as the many ‘technologies of state’ like documents, financial statements, legislation, reports, newsletters and surveys. In addition, as the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections approached, I also came to focus on the strategies local activists used to grasp

² According to the 2001 Census for Scotland, the population of Dumfries and Galloway was 147,765 (slightly down from 147,805 in 1991) out of a total Scottish figure of 5,062,011 (General Register Office for Scotland 2003a). Depopulation in rural Scotland continues to cause anxiety (see Jedrej and Nuttal 1996). In Dumfries and Galloway, where the local population is aging dramatically, some predict that the population may fall by 7.2% by 2018 (see ‘Population to fall below five million’ in *The Scotsman*, Saturday, 31 January 2004); only the Western Isles and the Orkneys are predicted to lose more people, with projected reductions of –17% and –10.5% respectively. Interestingly, although one Conservative MSP told me that rural depopulation and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) were the two most important issues affecting the future of Dumfries and Galloway, neither received much attention in local political debate. Instead – and despite their apparent banality – ‘local’ issues were prominent in the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections (see Chapter Six), such as Council Tax and alleged traffic

the changing political landscape around them: telephone canvassing, petitions, leafleting, readings of local newspapers and other media (including the Internet) and political gossip. However, the insights into local politics and power that political activists would glean from these strategies would often remain sketchy and elusive. Given that I, too, had used similar techniques as part of a research strategy designed to give substance to my own anthropological account of local politics – a strategy that included, amongst other practices, reading local newspapers, soliciting local gossip, and collecting leaflets, surveys and petitions – the result was a potential conundrum for anthropology: How does an anthropologists' rendering of the political imagination differ from that of political activists, *especially when the two seem to be seeking 'relevant' knowledge from the same sources, in the same places?*

Drawing on over eighteen months of fieldwork, this study concentrates on two political 'events' that helped focus the efforts of local activists as they organised politically in the aftermath of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)³. The first was a public inquiry held in Dumfries by the Boundary Commission for Scotland on 14-15 November 2002, which was convened in response to strong local opposition to controversial proposals to re-draw electoral boundaries in Dumfries and Galloway as required by the Scotland Act 1998. Virtually alone in supporting the Boundary Commission proposals, local Tories were amongst the many dozens of local activists for whom this inquiry became a focal point for action during 2002. As I argue in Chapters Three and Four, this inquiry provides a fascinating account of how a variety of political activists grappled with

'chaos' in Dumfries (including congestion at St Michaels Street roundabout and the threat to close Brooms Road Car Park).

³ A number of reports were published during my fieldwork on FMD. For more information about the crisis, see Bell et al (2002) and the Royal Society of Edinburgh (2002).

what often seemed a constantly changing – and utterly confusing – political landscape in which differentiating the ‘new’ and the ‘different’ from what was once ‘business as usual’ could not be taken for granted.

The second event was the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections held on 1 May 2003. For several months, preparations for these elections dominated the agenda of local Tories, who generally believed that the Conservative Party was engaged in a struggle for electoral survival in the ‘new’ political landscape of post-devolution Scotland. Following the 1997 General Election in which the Scottish Conservatives lost every one of the eleven Westminster constituencies that they had won in 1992 – including the previously ‘safe’ Dumfries constituency and the neighbouring seat of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale – their efforts locally drew on a much-diminished base of support. Most local Tory strategists worked from the assumption that they had endured their own, quite literal ‘crisis’ in representation, the material consequences of which entailed losses of financial and other resources, legitimacy and local knowledge. This study therefore analyses how local Conservatives attempted to address this crisis as they organised to contest the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections held that year (see Part Two: The Lesser Spotted Tory).

Of course, the marginal location of Tory Party activists in Scotland institutionally may not be unrelated to the fact that where they do appear ‘strong’ locally they are to be found at the geographical periphery in places like Dumfries and Galloway. This may be no accident. But one of the unanswered questions of this thesis remains whether the marginal status of my ethnographic subjects is a condition of their geographical and/or institutional location, or whether in fact others located closer to the political ‘centre’

share their experiences of activism as well? It is worth asking this question when one considers the fact that to the ethnographic subjects of my study, much political activism seemed like ‘business as usual’; the activities in which they engaged that were ‘new’ or ‘different’ were not self-evidently so. As a result, one – both the activist and the anthropologist alike – had to strain oneself to make novelty and differences appear.

Therefore, it should not be too surprising that running throughout this thesis is a concern with where one goes to locate what might appear as distinctively anthropological knowledge of local politics as opposed to that which political activists themselves acquire. As I discuss later in this chapter, this concern is worth addressing since most of the political activists I encountered in Dumfries and Galloway presented the more pressing problems with which they were confronted as being, at essence, about knowledge. Perhaps more accurately, this presentation was really one about the knowledge that political activists perceived themselves to ‘lack’. As a result, a huge amount of activist time and energy was devoted to addressing this alleged ‘lack’ so much so that one develops a sense that the work of political activists is always orientated towards addressing something, somewhere else, that has been missed.

Miyazaki (2003, 2004) has observed that a similar sense – one of ‘catching up’ – is vital to the ways in which anthropologists and social scientists build prospective momentum in their own knowledge-making practices. This sense of movement – towards something that has been missed, but that always remains beyond the purview of the immediate anthropological or activist project – guides this thesis, which otherwise follows my own ethnographic journey (cf. Coutin 2005) through Dumfries and Galloway from when I first encountered it until the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council

elections. But to make these observations is not, in itself, enough to answer the question with which I begin: where does one go to locate relevant knowledge, whether relevant to the anthropologist and/or the political activist. Rather, in providing a ‘provisional’ answer to this question – that one must seek such knowledge somewhere else – as I do when I conclude Chapter Eight, I am really drawing attention to the grounds from which our respective anthropological and activist journeys are propelled.

Devolution and Scottish nationalism

Following the defeat of the Major Government at the 1997 General Election – in which the Scottish Tories lost all of their seats – eighteen years of Conservative Party rule that had begun with Margaret Thatcher’s historic victory in 1979 were brought to an end in the United Kingdom. Elected in its place was a new Labour Government – led by Prime Minister Tony Blair – which was committed to a policy of devolving power to Scotland and Wales. In a referendum on devolution held on 11 September 1997⁴, Scots voted overwhelmingly for the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament⁵. On 1 July 1999, the first Scottish Parliament in 292 years – indeed, the first ever democratically elected Scottish Parliament – was opened (Jones 1999:1; cf. Dewar 1998, Glendinning 1999).

This period in Scotland’s recent history was one marked by dramatic political and constitutional change (cf. Greenhouse 2002). Commencing my PhD shortly after the opening of the Scottish Parliament, these changes seemed to present anthropologists with

⁴ Coinciding with the 700th anniversary of William Wallace’s victory over the English at the Battle of Stirling Bridge, one leading BBC journalist in Scotland described the date as being met ‘with enthusiasm, irony or a shiver’ depending on one’s political leanings (Taylor 1999:125). Of course, 11 September is now charged with other meanings since the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 (see Chapter Two).

an opportunity to focus on issues of statecraft, bureaucracy and institution-building – an area of strong anthropological interest that rapidly expanded during the 1990s (Borneman 1992, 1993, 1997; Bourdieu 1999; Ferguson 1990; Gupta 1995; Herzfeld 1993; Kus & Raharijaona 2000; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Scott 1998; Taussig 1997; Verdery 1993). In Scotland, these interests are often framed by scholarly debates about nationalism – an intellectual move that seems both obvious and inevitable at the same time. Taking up an argument, made by Charles McKean (1999:1), that in a democracy the Parliament ‘is the principal expression of national identity, power and authority’, I initially asked whether it has now become redundant to describe Scotland as a ‘stateless nation’ (cf. McCrone 1992)? This question seemed important for two reasons. Firstly, the proposition that Scotland ‘is’ a nation has been largely undisputed since the nineteenth century (Alter 1985:6), particularly by Scottish analysts. David McCrone of the University of Edinburgh has argued that ‘[it] is indubitably clear that Scotland survived the Union of 1707 as a separate ‘civil society’ and as a nation’ (1992:3) while Tom Devine at the University of Aberdeen published his critically acclaimed history of *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* in the months immediately following the official opening of the Scottish Parliament. Even if such inferences suggest more a commitment to *nationism* (Cohen 1996, 1999) than nationalism itself, Scotland’s status as a ‘banal’ nation (Billig 1995) appears largely taken for granted by most Scots regardless.

Secondly, Scotland’s ‘statelessness’ has traditionally made it an interesting case study in the general nationalism literature (e.g. Alter 1985:99-103, Guibernau 1996:101, Nairn 1997). Other scholars have placed Scotland in comparative perspective with

⁵ 1 775 045 – 74.3% of the vote – people voted ‘yes’ in the referendum. 614 400 – 25.7% – voted against devolution (Taylor 1999:138).

regionally based nationalist movements throughout Europe (cf. Brand 1990, Kellas 1992, Lynch 1996). But if one accepted that Scotland is 'indisputably' a nation, the political question of who governs Scotland had not been – and may not yet be – settled. After all, Richard Parry observed that the new Parliament 'competes for legitimacy and prominence in a crowded governmental space' with both Westminster and Scottish local government (1999:14), not to mention the various agencies and non-Governmental organisations that derive their funding and authority from these and other levels of Government, such as the European Union (see Bellier & Wilson 2000, Holmes 2000, Shore 2000) – or civil society, for that matter. How might an anthropologist locate an emergent (Scottish) state within this so-called governmental space?

These issues potentially presented anthropologists and other social scientists with a unique and innovative opportunity to study the discursive and institutional practices involved in creating a 'new' state in a Western setting. In Scotland, a state was forming, perhaps almost from a new beginning, with the benefit of an indigenous (Scottish) political heritage and scholarly traditions, distinctive legal and educational systems, and a sophisticated archival record. All of these traditions survived the Act of Union in 1707 and the subsequent dissolution of the medieval Scottish Parliament (Hearn 2000, Paterson 1994). Perhaps a 'nascent state' (Jean-Klein 2000) – or what I then imagined a *state-in-the-making*⁶ – could have already been located amongst these traditions. But *the modern Scottish Parliament and its associated institutions were transforming in the full play of*

⁶ I had in mind something akin to Latour's rendering of scientific inventions as a 'black box', that is, a complex 'piece of machinery' or 'set of commands' for which only 'input and output count' (Latour 1987:2-3). I encountered other such boxes during my fieldwork – the 'state', political parties – and so the question becomes: How might the analyst 'open' the black box? Latour proposes doing this by 'opening up' scientific controversies by exploring science-in-the-making (1987:4). It is therefore from here that I draw the metaphor of a state-in-the-making.

public scrutiny and debate. Furthermore, an anthropological study of such transformations – located within a crowded institutional space in which social scientists, journalists and other political observers also competed for legitimacy and prominence – would not itself necessarily transcend this landscape⁷. In other words, anthropologists studying a (Scottish) state-in-the-making might have found themselves under the same public scrutiny and debate from which the subjects of their ethnographic research could not escape⁸.

Governing pre-devolution Scotland, then, was already complex and multi-layered. One anthropologist observed a ‘spectacle’ of agricultural and governmental institutions impinging on the lives of hill sheep farmers in the Scottish borders (Gray 1999:440, 1996). I envisioned a picture of *entangled institutions*; consider, for example, what at that time was the ‘latest inventory’ of the ‘quango universe’:

‘[Three] nationalised industries, three public corporations, 36 executive and 30 advisory bodies, three tribunals, 68 NHS bodies, and a penumbra of ‘local public spending bodies’...’ (Parry 1999:12)

And these were just the quangos⁹; the picture potentially gets more complicated if one includes ‘civil society’, whose claim to ‘speak’ for Scotland in the absence of a

⁷ Drawing on the work of Lisa Malkki (1999), I discuss this ‘competition’ further in Chapter Three.

⁸ Other scholars – particularly in history, sociology and political science – have taken a strong interest in devolution and contemporary Scottish politics (e.g. Bogdanor 1999, Hassan and Lynch 2001, Hassan and Warhurst 2002, Henderson 1999, Hutchison 2001, McCrone 1992, Paterson 1994). Journalists (e.g. Jones 1999, Taylor 1999) have also published accounts of devolution, as have some of the Scottish Parliament’s leading proponents from civil society, such as Wright (1997). The terrain has, therefore, been ‘already covered, dissected, and written about’ to an extent that presents anthropologists with ‘troubling’ challenges (see Edwards 2000:14, n22).

⁹ The acronym ‘quango’ means ‘quasi non-governmental organisation’, a ‘democratic form that keeps important services out of local government and gives central government rights of intervention without day-to-day responsibility’ (Parry 1999:27).

Parliament was now open to challenge¹⁰. Bearing this image in mind, the creation of the new Parliament could be thought of as building on and extending these entanglements – effectively, an *adding* of administrative layers (cf. Latour 1993; Riles 2001, 2003a; Strathern 1999). Thus, there may have seemed a recognisable ‘change’ between pre- and post-devolution Scotland, but no recognisable ‘rupture’. Given that Scotland’s governmental space was already crowded by various administrative forms, which of these extensions might be appropriated (cut) in the process of being ‘recognised’ as distinctly Scottish – and distinctly ‘the state’ – in the ‘new’, post-devolution political landscape?

If it is possible to describe civic Scotland’s twenty-year campaign for a Parliament as a struggle for statehood, the idea that Scotland remained a ‘stateless nation’ seems particularly problematic. Some scholars have highlighted talk of a ‘new’ politics in Scotland, derived from the sense that the new institution was a ‘civic’ Parliament whose every action would be ‘monitored by committees with roots in civic life’ (Paterson 1999:34). Here, then, was an engaging paradox. In Scotland, there was allegedly a ‘new’, responsive governing apparatus that one might describe a state. But ‘talk’ of an historical period of state making – into which Scotland was entering – was taking place in a space already ‘crowded’ with quasi-governmental bodies and a developed civil society. So, what would make the difference (that would make the state) – talk?

This paradox presented ethnographers of Scotland with a set of interesting challenges. Scotland already existed as a nation in general scholarly and popular

¹⁰ Indeed, in the struggle ‘to define and dispose’ the interest of Scotland (Cohen 1997:98), some civic leaders might challenge the legitimacy of the Scottish Parliament by re-fixing the terms of Scotland’s statelessness (Edwards 1998).

imaginings before the emergence of anthropology as a social science¹¹. Furthermore, its location within the 'regionally specified' literature of anthropology (Fardon 1990) and the history of the discipline was, until recently, ambiguous¹². Speaking generally, the anthropology of contemporary Scotland remains confined to the remote Highlands and Islands (Church 1990; Cohen 1982, 1987; Nadel-Klein 1984, 1986, 1991, 1995; Parman 1990) while there exists, at present, very little in the way of an ethnographic record of contemporary state institutions or practices in Scotland¹³.

I suggested that the new Parliament would not only 'map' itself onto the informal organisations and networks that are popularly conceived as 'civil society'¹⁴. As a new institution, it would also appropriate and work through these and other existing, formal state structures while paradoxically also cultivating a distinct public space – independent of these structures – in which 'it' could be apprehended (cf. Riles 1996, 1998, 2001). Furthermore, with time, the Scottish Parliament might reject the so-called 'new' politics

¹¹ This is one of two main presentations of Scotland as a case study in the nationalism literature, the other being one of historical 'invention' (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). Hutchinson (1994:28-29) briefly makes this point, while Trevor-Roper (1983) has famously argued this in relation to Highland culture. These arguments are consistent with Gellner's view that nationalism is not 'the awakening of nations to self-consciousness' but the modern *invention* of 'nations where they do not exist' (1983:56).

¹² According to Stocking (1995:47-83), two pioneers of nineteenth century anthropology – Andrew Lang and William Robertson Smith – might credit their Scottish heritage with for their interest in evolutionary theory. 'Both came from Scotland,' he writes, 'where cultural and political marginality and the survivals of the Celtic clan tradition had encouraged an anthropological attitude among some more adventurous intellects' (1995:50). However, their interests did not prompt them to conduct a nineteenth century version of 'anthropology at home', instead studying other peoples in more geographically distant locations of the British Empire.

¹³ There are several exceptions to this rule. Byron (1980) has explored the interface between local communities and state institutions on the periphery of Scotland. Jonathan Hearn (1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002) has published ethnographic work conducted in the Central Belt of Scotland on the 'autonomist' movement (i.e. pro-independence and/or pro-devolution) during the 1990s. Charsley (1986), meanwhile, has published ethnographic research carried out in urban Scotland.

¹⁴ For more on 'civil society', see Benthall (2000), Comaroff & Comaroff (1999), Coombe (1997), and Hann & Dunn (1996).

in favour of forms of partisan engagement with ‘issues’ that necessitated the intervention of an authority like the state¹⁵ – engagements that might appear to resurrect ‘older’ practices of doing politics. With this hypothesis in mind, I proposed to explore how the new Scottish Parliament might try to cultivate legitimacy and authority in an area of policy like rural development, in particular, forestry and land reform (see Hunter 1998, Wightman 1997, 1998). Nevertheless, the new Parliament and its associated institutions would have to cautiously work through ongoing and evolving transformations prompted by the uncertainty of devolution. Within this changed constitutional landscape, how might ‘rival power-seekers’ seek a ‘pretext’ for engagement (Swartz et al 1966:33)? How might this impact on state-making practices in Scotland? And will elements from civic Scotland attempt to appropriate various apparatuses of an emergent Scottish state to further their own interests? In asking these questions, I anticipated exploring not just the political claims that Scotland ‘makes’ but also the ways in which political claims ‘make’ Scotland (Hearn 2000:197).

In addition to these interests, I believed that attention would also have to be directed beyond the discursive practices by which political institutions and other groupings attempt to de-legitimise each other. This potentially meant considering how certain kinds of ‘technologies’ of state – or what, following Foucault (1977; see also Rabinow 1984), Tim Mitchell (1990:93) might call *disciplines* – are liable to ‘break down, counteract one another, or over-reach’¹⁶. It might also mean treating a range of documents and other discursive artefacts (cf. Riles 2005) in terms of their partiality and

¹⁵ My usage of ‘issue’ is analogous to Kuhn’s idea of a scientific ‘puzzle’ (Kuhn 1962, 1977), an argument that I develop in relation to Conservative Party electioneering in Chapter Six.

‘essential incompleteness’ (McHugh et al 1974:10), whether they are produced by state agencies, journalists, academics or others. Importantly, as an anthropologist, I was not the only person trying to make sense of these questions in Scotland.

The Forgotten Region

In planning my fieldwork, I wondered whether there might be other, rural-based interests who, fearing a powerful Edinburgh ‘clique’ might now come to dominate Scotland, would also seek to promote themselves and defend their interests? Lindsay Paterson observed shortly after the Scottish Parliament opened that public ‘consultation’ would provide people who live outside the Central Belt of Scotland with an important opportunity to overcome ‘a residual mistrust of the Parliament’s right to do anything at all’ (1999:38-39). Given that Dumfries and Galloway was one of only two Local Authority areas in Scotland that had voted against the new Parliament having tax varying powers, perhaps it was this region that he had in mind when he made this observation¹⁷.

Dumfries and Galloway is a ‘borderland’ region between England, Scotland and Ireland¹⁸. Historically a battleground between English and Scottish armies, much of the region remained lawless during the Middle Ages and little survives of its main towns from that period. Furthermore, politically, the component parts of Dumfries and Galloway were, in fact, separate entities until after the Second World War. Prior to the

¹⁶ Tim Mitchell is a political scientist whose argument that the state was a structural *effect* produced through the detailed organisation of space, time, function, supervision and surveillance (1990:95) has been very influential in anthropological theorising about the state during the 1990s.

¹⁷ Although a slight majority voted for the Parliament, only 48.8% of electors in Dumfries and Galloway voted for the Scottish Parliament to have tax varying powers. Orkney was the only other region to do the same (Hearn 2000:73).

radical reforms of local Councils contained within the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1974 – which saw the establishment of the Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council with its current local Authority boundaries (McConnell 2004) – the region did not exist as a ‘whole’ (cf. Strathern 1991) in an administrative sense¹⁹. Instead, there were four district authorities dominated by retired military men – so-called ‘colonels’ juntas’ (McCulloch 2000:517) – based on the old ‘counties’ of Dumfries and Galloway: Annandale and Eskdale, Nithsdale, Kirkcudbrightshire (also known as the Stewartry) and Wigtownshire²⁰.

Taking in all of the Stewartry and Wigtownshire as well as parts of Nithsdale, Galloway has been described as ‘a land apart’:

‘In former times Galloway was an autonomous region which was virtually independent of the rest of Scotland, and its inhabitants were regarded as a separate people with their own special identity.’ (McCulloch 2000:1)

¹⁸ In an ethnographic study on the impact of the Channel Tunnel in Kent, Eve Darian-Smith (1995, 1998, 1999) recently demonstrated the efficacy of carrying out fieldwork in another ‘borderland’, in this case between England/the UK and France/Europe.

¹⁹ Given its varied history and diverse traditions, imagining Dumfries and Galloway as an administrative space in the first instance might be helpful in commencing a study of local politics. After all, a point reinforced many times during the Boundary Commission public inquiry (see Chapter Four) was that the region’s boundaries have been ‘coterminous’ in an administrative or bureaucratic sense for over fifty years. Unlike many other areas in Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Health Board, Fire Brigade, Police Force, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway, and the local Tourist Board were just some of the organisations that shared the same boundaries. The region’s two Westminster and Scottish Parliament constituencies – including Dumfries in the east, and Galloway and Upper Nithsdale in the west – were also enclosed by these same boundaries.

²⁰ Furthermore, the Act allowed for the setting up of local Community Councils. Although these did not have any formal powers, they ‘were designed to act as conduits between the people living in their area and the relevant district and regional councils’ (McCulloch 2000:517). Community Councils constitute important sites of activism for many of the individuals who feature in this thesis.

This sense of separateness perhaps derives from the fact that it was independent from the rest of Scotland until the Middle Ages, but it was also the Covenanting stronghold in opposition to the Crown during the eighteenth century and was therefore subjected to constant military incursions (McCulloch 2000). However, such a view surfaces in some surprising places – including a retired Tory MP's autobiography:

'I loved Galloway and my feeling that I had become a part of it endured throughout that time. It was almost as though Galloway was another country, detached from the rest of Scotland. Even its name sounded ancient and romantic, and its scenery was the Scottish idyll. Its people were strong and self-reliant and true. The sense of community was palpable, both across the constituency and in each of its many old towns and villages. There seemed to be a vibrancy and confidence in its own identity which embraced you. Any countryside that has water running through it has an immediate advantage and Galloway has several fine rivers, but it also has woods and hills and glens, wild moorland and gentle grassland, all laid out criss-crossed by its famous drystone dykes, almost like some great landscaped park. Every aspect pleased the eye...' (Lang 2002: 43)

Lacking 'both raw materials and the means of generating industrial power' while also being relatively distant from consumer markets, the local economy has been based on agriculture, light industry and other, ancillary businesses for much of its history (McCulloch 2005:519)²¹. The same could be said of much of Dumfriesshire, which encompasses all of Annandale and Eskdale and takes in most of Nithsdale. With a population of about 36,000 people, Dumfries is the main county town of Dumfriesshire, an 800 year-old historic market town that enjoys a somewhat iconic status in the Scottish nationalist imagination because of its association with the famous Scottish poet Robert

²¹ This might explain why the impact of Foot and Mouth in Dumfries and Galloway had been so severe, although many also noted the importance of other industries like forestry and tourism at the time (see Chapter Two).

Burns and the Scottish King, Robert the Bruce (Fortune and McMillan 2005)²². Despite this status, however, Andrew Forrester writes in his biography of William Paterson – who was born and raised in Dumfriesshire and later founded the Bank of England – that it is ‘easy to miss Dumfries’ as one travels ‘north into Scotland from Carlisle’:

‘The road and rail links speed past the little border village of Gretna, where runaway lovers from the south used to be married at the blacksmith’s anvil, and head directly for Lockerbie and the pass of Beattock. Beyond them lies Glasgow and the distant highlands. Dumfries lies off to the west, sitting all square on both banks of the River Nith, a historic county town, associated with the poet Robert Burns and with the great hero of Scottish history, Robert the Bruce. It bears its historic importance with dignity, its older buildings handsomely dressed in the rich red hue of the local sandstone.’ (Forrester 2004:xiii)

Consistent with ideas about being peripheral and ‘apart’ from the rest of Scotland, many contemporary residents of Dumfries and Galloway believe the region is often ‘forgotten’ by others. During my fieldwork, I encountered many different people, from a variety of political standpoints, who told me the region was being ‘forgotten’ or ‘ignored’. In itself, there is nothing unusual about the fact that local people might access such imagery in rural Britain. In her ethnographic study of a small Lancashire town, Jeanette Edwards (2000) noted that many residents described it as if it were remote – ‘the back of beyond’, ‘a backwater’, ‘cut off’. However, she argues that:

‘... [While] clearly not all viewpoints are disseminated equally and some voices are louder than others, there is equal access to, and availability of, remoteness as a cultural concept. This concept is mobilized for particular reasons and acts as a means of differentiation.’ (Edwards 2000:20)

²² Robert Burns lived in Dumfries from 1791-1796; he is buried at St Michaels Church near the Town Centre. At Greyfriars Monastery – which used to stand on the site of the Greyfriars Church in the Town Centre – Robert the Bruce famously assassinated his rival John ‘the Red’ Comyn before claiming the Scottish throne in 1306 (Fortune & McMillan 2005:6-7).

Drawing on the ethnography of Britain (e.g. Cohen 1982, 1987; Emmet 1964; Ennew 1980; Frankenburg 1957, 1966; Macdonald 1997; Rapport 1993, 2002; Strathern 1981; see also Tyler 2003, 2004), Edwards concludes that there is nothing unique about local efforts to frame one's community as 'distant' from the British mainstream. To be drawn into a debate about whether or not a locality is 'remote' would therefore miss the point. Edwards suggests what matters is that:

'The sense of differentiation imaged within and between communities constantly defines and redefines 'insider' and 'outsider', but who is an insider and who an outsider shifts according to the reason for delineating the distinction in the first place. Categories thus formulated are fluid and contingent, but congealed for particular purposes. From any partisan position, it is possible to concretise one possibility, or to solidify one set of connections.' (Edwards 2000:20-21)

I return to Jeanette Edwards' observations later, but for now I want to note that an image of Dumfries and Galloway as the 'Forgotten Region' of Scotland remains a powerful one at the local level. One of the most striking presentations of this view appeared during the summer of 2003, when the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* published a two-page article entitled, simply, 'The Forgotten Region'. Quoted in this article were a number of local politicians critical of the Scottish Executive for holding back additional funds earmarked to help the local Tourist Board with Foot and Mouth recovery. One local journalist said to me a few days later:

'It doesn't matter who is in power – Labour or Tory – we're always forgotten. That's who we are: the Forgotten Region.'

Another rendering of the Forgotten Region occurred during the Boundary Commission's public inquiry in Dumfries on 14-15 November 2002 (see Chapter Four) while the local Labour MP Russell Brown argued against proposed changes to electoral boundaries in Dumfries and Galloway. Later in the inquiry, a senior Council official accused a Conservative Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) – who supported the Boundary Commission's plans – of 'falling into the trap' of 'seeing' the Highlands and Islands and 'forgetting' about 'the south west of Scotland.'

Articulated in contrast to another peripheral part of Scotland – the Highlands and Islands – the idea of the Forgotten Region would sometimes be inflated to include other parts of southern Scotland: the Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire. Indeed, the Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP) – which was formed shortly before I arrived in Dumfries and Galloway and whose activities I describe in Chapter Two – extended this theme in one of its newsletters, published shortly after I completed my fieldwork:

'The SUP has long been concerned that the south of Scotland is becoming forgotten by those in authority and invisible to those planning to visit Scotland – left behind socially, economically and environmentally compared to other rural areas, especially the Highlands and Islands.' (*SUP News* 2004: 4)

Politicians quoted in this newsletter added their own variations on this argument. One included a Conservative MSP – Alex Fergusson – who said:

'My whole motivation for entering the world of Scottish politics was to try to ensure fairer representation for the South of Scotland in a world in which reference to 'rural Scotland' too often referred to areas North of the Highland line.' (*SUP News* 2004:4-5)

Another Conservative MSP – David Mundell – added that ‘policymakers based in the Central Belt are ignoring southern Scotland, preferring instead to equate a rural agenda with the needs of the Highlands and Islands’ (*SUP News* 2004:4-5). These views also cut across political Parties, with the Scottish Nationalist MSP Alasdair Morgan observing that:

‘Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders have a lower profile within Scotland and abroad than the Highlands and Islands. For historical and other reasons, such as being almost twice the size of the South of Scotland, the latter tends to impinge more on the consciousness of people and of government.’ (*SUP News* 2004:4-5)

Even when some politicians offered only qualified support for this view, there was an acceptance that the region had nevertheless been ‘left behind’ the Highlands and Islands and that Dumfries and Galloway needed to ‘catch up’ (cf. Levine 2004, Miyazaki 2003). As Russell Brown MP put it:

‘To a certain extent, I have to disagree that the South of Scotland is becoming increasingly forgotten... The doom and gloom messages which some people put out about our locality being left behind [do] nothing to help our area. We should never forget that the Highland and Islands area has been well organised for many years in making its case in a number of different forums and our locality is still trying to play ‘catch-up’. ...Let’s be more positive about ourselves and the area in which we live!’ (*SUP News* 2004:4-5)

During the early months of my fieldwork, I found it ironic that the political activists I encountered saw themselves as having been ‘forgotten’ in the ‘new’ Scotland given that the Foot and Mouth outbreak of that year had ensured Dumfries and Galloway was rarely

off the front page of Scotland's national newspapers. But what I thought was important about this imagery was not just that the region was described as peripheral to the large, urban settlements in the Central Belt of Scotland. It was also deployed in relation to other peripheral places, notably the Highlands and Islands. Rendering Dumfries and Galloway as the 'Forgotten Region' in this way evoked a sense that the area is a *truly* peripheral place compared to the Highlands and Islands, which – at the very least – is an area of which people think when they imagine marginal places in Scotland. In this sense, it could be said that the rural Southwest is at the 'marginal margins' of Scotland (cf. Green 2005; see also Herzfeld 1987).

In addition, that Dumfries and Galloway might constitute a 'forgotten' part of Scotland has been mirrored in the anthropological and social scientific literature of Scotland. As I have already noted – and as if to amplify the anxieties of a group like the SUP – much of the ethnography of Scotland is focused on the Highlands and Islands (Nadel-Klein 1997). There are a few examples of ethnographic work having been conducted in the Scottish Borders (Gray 1984, 1988, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2003; Littlejohn 1963; and Neville 1979, 1987) and, more recently, South Ayrshire (Stewart and Strathern 2001), but this research remains exceptional in Scotland²³. Furthermore, no one has yet conducted long-term anthropological fieldwork in Dumfries and Galloway, although anthropologists like Jonathan Hearn (2000) and Charles Jedrej (see Jedrej and Nuttall 1996) have carried out 'forays' into the region and there are one or two anthropologically trained scholars working at the Crichton

²³ For more on the Border between England and Scotland, see Glauser (2000) and (Neville 1998).

University Campus²⁴. Meanwhile, the ‘invisibility’ of Southwest Scotland is also reflected in the social sciences more generally. A couple of exceptions are worth noting, such as an historical study of land ownership and rural society in Southwest Scotland (Campbell 1991). In addition, a recent sociological study of identity constructions amongst the landed elite (see Bechhofer et al 1999; McCrone et al 1998) perhaps drew heavily on Dumfries and Galloway because the area boasts some of Scotland’s largest landowners, including the Duke of Buccleuch²⁵.

Given the paucity of scholarship on Dumfries and Galloway, I realised that conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the region had the potential to contribute to basic anthropological research by focusing on an under-studied region of rural Scotland. This was important to bear in mind because, in the aftermath of the Foot and Mouth epidemic, much of what had seemed most vital about my original field proposal (Strathern 1999:2) seemed to have become redundant. With much of the countryside remaining ‘closed’ and Government agencies reluctant almost to the point of inactivity to engage with a range of rural issues, I believed my research needed a new focus in the aftermath of Foot and Mouth. I therefore arrived in the field with a mind open to other research possibilities, potentially in search of ‘new’ ethnographic objects.

²⁴ Donald MacLeod is an Oxford-trained anthropologist who runs the Tourism Research Centre at the University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus. He has been developing a research agenda with the local Tourist Board, the local Council and Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway (SEDG). Although little of it has so far been published, for examples of where this research is going, see MacLeod (2002) and Stevenson (2002).

²⁵ Scotland’s largest private landowner, the Duke of Buccleuch owns more land than any other individual or organisation apart from the Forestry Commission. His estate centres on Drumlanrig Castle in Nithsdale but he owns huge tracts of land in Annandale and Eskdale, which one Tory activist thought explained why this area remained the strongest source of Conservative Party support in the region.

The lesser-spotted Tory

Perhaps consistent with a view that Dumfries and Galloway remains ‘apart’ from the rest of Scotland is that – if one chose to do so (although it should not be assumed that local people did) – the region could be said to possess a ‘distinctive’ political heritage that runs counter to popular narratives of contemporary political history in Scotland (see Hearn 2000, 2002)²⁶. For instance, I have already noted that Dumfries and Galloway had produced an ambiguous result in the devolution referendum of 1997 – a result that suggested the region might make an attractive field site for my initial purposes due to the likely existence of local groups inclined to challenge the legitimacy of the new Parliament. As one of only two regions not to vote ‘Yes-Yes’ to the twin questions of (a) setting up a Scottish Parliament with (b) tax varying powers, the region’s reluctant support for the new institution might have derived from its proximity to England and the high number of English ‘in-comers’ to the area (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996).

However, equally plausible might be explaining this result in terms of the apparent ‘strength’ of local Conservatives, who continued to enjoy (some) electoral success at the local, Scottish Parliament and Westminster levels, unlike their colleagues in many other areas North of the Border.

Indeed, some considered Dumfries and Galloway noteworthy as a Tory ‘outpost’ in Scotland. On Saturday, 9 June 2001 – just days after the 2001 General Election – a cartoon appeared in the national broad-sheet newspaper *The Scotsman* showing a country road filled with motorists and caravans (see Figure 3). As they drive into the distance, a road sign is passed on their right, which announces:

Welcome to Dumfries and Galloway
“Unique Habitat of Scotland’s only Tory MP!”
“Amazing Wonders of Nature!”

With their tongues firmly planted in their cheeks, Murdo MacLeod and Jason Allardyce picked up this theme in an article entitled ‘Return of the lesser-spotted Tory’, which appeared in *The Scotsman*’s sister newspaper *Scotland on Sunday* the following day:

‘Unsure of his new habitat, the newly reintroduced species emerges blinking into the sunlight. Physically, he is suited to the new environment – one which is naturally his and which he is expected to re-colonise. But he is alone, and perhaps unsure whether he is ready yet. After a century of releasing once-extinct species back into the wild, Scotland last week went a step further and brought back a beast many thought was gone for good: the Scottish Tory.’ (*Scotland on Sunday*, 10 June 2001)

The ‘amazing wonder’ being caricatured by cartoonist and newspaper journalist alike was the election that year of the Scottish Conservative MP Peter Duncan, who defeated the Scottish National Party (SNP) in the constituency of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale by just 74 votes. His election effectively brought to an end a four-year period in Scotland’s history when the country was described as a ‘Tory-free zone’ following the infamous ‘wipe-out’ of Scottish Conservative MPs at the 1997 General Election (see Chapter Five). His ‘surprise victory’ appeared not to have been anticipated by most observers of Scottish politics. MacLeod and Allardyce wrote:

‘The very reappearance of this species has shocked naturalists and political observers alike, who thought the Scottish Tory was gone and forgotten – a victim of political climate change and a failure on its part to adjust to the new habitat.’ (*Scotland on Sunday*, 10 June 2001)

²⁶ I develop this argument in Chapter Five.

Coming ‘four years after Conservative meltdown in Scotland and in the face of a UK-wide wipe-out’, the election of the lone Scottish Tory MP ‘follows in a long tradition of attempting to reintroduce endangered species north of the Border’:

‘In the last ten years naturalists have planned to return the reindeer – which died out in the 12th century – the beaver and successfully reintroduced the red kite and the sea eagle. However, they have failed in their attempts to bring back the wolf, and when last Thursday’s exit polls came in it appeared the same fate had befallen the Conservatives.’ (*Scotland on Sunday*, 10 June 2001)

The article’s authors then attempted to explain the success of ‘the Tory transplantation’ in Galloway:

‘This is supposed to be a Conservative MP’s natural environment – south of Scotland farmland, where Tory voters rail against Labour “townies”. Yet in 1997 even its natural richness could not save Ian Lang, the former Scottish secretary. However, Duncan fought an energetic and relentlessly focused campaign which concentrated on local issues and Labour ‘indifference’ to the plight of rural Scotland. Locals, angered by the government’s handling of the foot and mouth outbreak, punished both Labour and the SNP by voting Tory.’ (*Scotland on Sunday*, 10 June 2001)

When I first read this article a couple of months before arriving in Dumfries and Galloway, I was struck by the stereotype the authors sketched of a Tory unsuited to a ‘modern’ Scotland, stuck in a (rural) past (cf. Fabian 1983). But I was also sceptical of the above, throwaway explanation for Mr Duncan’s success. I wondered about the local issues on which Mr Duncan supposedly fought ‘an energetic and relentlessly focused campaign’? And why was it that so-called ‘locals’ decided to ‘punish’ the SNP as well as the Labour Party over the Foot and Mouth catastrophe that had hit the region that year? The SNP – Labour’s main Opposition in Scotland – had won the constituency by almost

6,000 votes in the 1997 General Election, and then held it again by over 3,000 votes in the first election to the new Scottish Parliament a couple of years later. The SNP might have realistically expected to have their electoral base strengthened by anti-Government feeling just as much as the Tories. This contention becomes even more problematic when one considers that in the neighbouring Dumfries constituency – an area no less affected by Foot and Mouth than Galloway and Upper Nithsdale – the incumbent Labour MP Russell Brown increased his majority to almost 10,000 votes.

If such explanations seemed inadequate, and if answers to these and other questions about Dumfries and Galloway could not be found in either the national press or social scientific record of Scotland²⁷, then perhaps this presented an opportunity for political anthropology. After all, there was a tantalising, potential parallel, here: just as I had ‘arrived’ in Dumfries and Galloway to commence anthropological fieldwork, a group of political activists who had once been dominant across the region – the Scottish Conservatives – had allegedly ‘returned’²⁸. Unsure of their ‘new habitat’ and emerging ‘blinking into the sunlight’, both the anthropologist and the would-be local Tory activist could be said to have shared the same predicament: where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge? It seemed to me that studying local Conservative Party activists as they sought to address their own knowledge ‘crisis’ following their defeat at the 1997 General Election might tell anthropologists something useful about knowledge-making practices more generally.

²⁷ As Hutchison (2001:176) notes, very little scholarship exists on the Scottish Conservatives – unlike the Scottish Labour Party and the SNP (but not, interestingly, the Liberal Democrats). In his bibliography, he provides some useful pointers to what historical work exists on the Scottish Tories (Hutchison 2001:175-180) while the political scientist David Seawright (1996, 1998, 1999, 2002) maintains contemporary interests in Conservatives North of the Border (see Chapter Five).

Modern knowledge

By taking up such questions, my study therefore draws strongly on a growing field of ethnographic inquiry concerned with understanding (modern) knowledge practices. Following the call for ‘cultural critique’ during the 1980s (Clifford 1988, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Fabian 1983; Thomas 1994) – or what has also been called the ‘post-modern’ or ‘reflexive’ turn in anthropology (cf. Edwards 2000:21-22) – much recent scholarship has focused on addressing anthropological strategies of making knowledge. Perhaps most obviously, such a concern has informed discussions of fieldwork methodology and its implications for anthropological theory (e.g. Amit 2000; Bhabha 1994; Fardon 1990; Gupta & Ferguson 1997a, 1997b; James et al 1997).

However, recent ethnographies have endeavoured to foreground anthropological knowledge making practices as an object of analysis in the process of apprehending other kinds of ‘new’ ethnographic objects. Some of these ‘objects’ include accounting (Maurer 2002), auditing (Strathern 2000), democracy (Greenhouse 1998, Paley 2001; see also Marcus 2002), elections (Coles 2005), financial markets (Miyazaki 2003), immigration (Coutin 2005), kinship and the new reproductive technologies (Edwards 1993, 2000; Edwards and Strathern 1999; Franklin 1993, 1997; Strathern 1995b, 1999) and political activism (Dahl 2004, Jean-Klein 2002, Levine 2004, Riles 2001). All of these anthropologists have used the insights gleaned from such ethnography to reflect on anthropological and more general modes of knowledge (making).

Here, I want to draw on a small handful of these studies, which are relevant to the concerns of this thesis. In particular, I want to discuss Hirokazu Miyazaki’s

²⁸ Although it could be said that they had never really left. Rather, as I argue in Chapter Five, they had been ‘left behind’ (cf. Levine 2004, Miyazaki 2003).

consideration of financial analysts in Japan, Susan Coutin's work on illegal immigration to the United States, and Annelise Riles' now well-known observations about women's rights activists from Fiji. I then turn to Jeanette Edwards who, along with many others in recent years, has developed an interest in the new reproductive technologies (NRTs). This, in turn, has opened up 'new' debates around a very 'old' anthropological object: kinship.

To begin, it is worth noting Miyazaki's characterisation of this scholarship as being primarily concerned with 'an old theoretical problem': how to 'access the now' (Miyazaki 2003:255). Indeed, his and other social theorists' interest in 'novel' financial instruments – such as futures, options, and currency swaps – is partly an attempt to address this problem by apprehending capitalism as it enters 'a new phase.' Ironically, though, 'in contemplating problems posed by the crisis of the 'new' capitalism, social theorists may already be behind, that is, their contemplations may be incongruous with the temporality of the market' (Miyazaki 2003:255). In other words, as anthropologists attempt to grapple 'the now' ethnographically, they may well be coming 'from behind' in the sense that their apprehensions of 'new' ethnographic objects occur belatedly, that is, after the fact that such objects might warrant anthropological attention has been established retrospectively. As Miyazaki puts it:

'At the heart of social theorists' turn to financial markets and other new research objects is a more general anxiety regarding the incongruity between the temporal orientation of their knowledge and that of the changed or changing world. ... This anxiety is perhaps intrinsic to all retrospective modes of knowing such as social theory. Yes, for practitioners of such knowledge, the very novelty of their research objects at least temporarily generates its own prospective momentum ... [although] the very objectification of these new research objects tends to undo this prospective momentum.' (Miyazaki 2003:255)

For Miyazaki, any attempt at apprehending ‘new’ ethnographic objects inevitably raises questions about the kind of knowledge anthropology produces. Most obviously, perhaps, anthropologists ‘know’ retrospectively. What is important to one’s informants is not necessarily apparent until one has spent some time in the field and is able to establish what was significant after the fact (so to speak) of having carried out ethnographic fieldwork.

How might one begin to unpack such knowledge making practices? Importantly, Miyazaki suggests that anthropologists look for research objects that might function as analogues (or substitutes?) to anthropology so that in the practices of others we can attempt to unearth some of the anxieties and incongruities that propel the making of anthropological knowledge (2003:255). Some of the examples he offers are to be found in financial markets in which he argues that Japanese financial analysts are – like social theorists – trying to come to terms with a sense of the belated by ‘catching up’ with, in this instance, their US counterparts. However, what is most interesting about Miyazaki’s argument is that exploring such analogous practices is not, on its own, an exercise in reflecting on anthropological knowledge making to the exclusion of other questions. Rather, in trying to come to terms with the ways in which both anthropologists and Japanese financial analysts grapple with their own sense of temporal incongruity, Miyazaki is himself trying to overcome a sense of the belated – by accessing the now – in addressing what is central to current knowledge practices.

I have more to say about Miyazaki in Chapter Five but I want to highlight here my belief that there is considerable value in pursuing this dual concern for the ways in

which both anthropologists and their ethnographic subjects frame (know) their respective social worlds. I suggest that such a concern speaks to core anthropological problems that nevertheless remain relevant to wider knowledge making practices, which are often central to contemporary politics in Western liberal democracies like the United Kingdom.

In a study of illegal immigration from El Salvador to the United States, Susan Coutin (2005) is partly motivated by a similar interest in anthropological knowledge. However, she draws a parallel between what she calls 'legal fictions' and ethnography. For instance, as 'legal and other accounts produce truth' about legal and illegal immigration, they also generate 'concealed realities' that create a sense of 'territorial integrity' based on exclusion (Coutin 2005:195). Importantly, one cannot produce such senses of integrity without simultaneously creating 'territorial gaps' that, in Coutin's example, constitute 'the space occupied by the person deemed to be legally outside of the United States': 'Thus, for territories to have integrity, territorial disruptions were required' (Coutin 2005:195).

Coutin talks of these territorial disruptions as a kind of absenting, which is 'often partial in that, alongside those who are legally present, unauthorized migrants travel, work, take up residence, shop, and so forth' (2005:196). This creates another sense, that of 'the underground', which is:

'... occupied by the unauthorized, is a dimension of social reality rather than a separate place. As the unauthorized are both absent and not, this dimension is both totalising and partial, hidden and visible... [It] is precisely this ambiguity or movement that makes the presence of absented people particularly valuable... Prohibited or hidden practices and persons allow the 'above board' to assume its unmarked status as the dominant version of social reality...' (Coutin 2005:196)

Central to Coutin's argument is an analogy between the illegal immigrant – whose presence is felt despite being legally 'absent' from an integrated, territorial jurisdiction like the United States – and the anthropologist, who often writes him or herself 'out' of the ethnographies he/she produces but whose presence nevertheless remains inescapable. In contrast, then, to Miyazaki's argument that social theorists in general – and anthropologists in particular – must grapple with temporal incongruity in the course of generating 'new' knowledge, Coutin believes that the knowledge both anthropologists and immigration lawyers produce creates as well as depends on sustaining a sense of territorial/spatial incongruity.

Again, in Chapter Five, I will have more to say about Susan Coutin – particularly in relation to her notion that certain kinds of ethnographic subjects (in addition to the anthropologist) can be 'absented' from one's field site. However, probably the best recent example of work produced along these lines is Annelise Riles' ethnography (2001) of Fijian activists at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (also known as the Beijing Conference) in 1995. Exploring practices central to international networking, Riles takes 'the Network' to refer to 'a set of institutions, knowledge practices, and artefacts thereof that internally generate the effects of their own reality by reflecting on themselves' (2001:3). Fundamentally, she asks where an anthropological analysis of international networking might proceed, when many of the practices under consideration are the very same as those that anthropologists use to carry out ethnographic fieldwork? This problem was particularly important given the number of activists Riles encountered in her fieldwork who had been trained in the social sciences generally – and social anthropology in particular – often at Western Universities. Such a question also has a

number of consequences for anthropology, especially in terms of rendering problematic any distinction between what ‘we’ do and what engages ‘our’ informants, ‘out there’ in the world. In an innovative move, Riles, decides to foreground the ways in which activists ‘do’ difference as a means of trying to reflect on the ‘distinctiveness’ of both political activism and the anthropological enterprise. While many of the practices in which anthropologists and activists engage might not be dissimilar, the question that becomes important here is what knowledge practices are named anthropological or political, and at what moment? This question implicitly informs much of my analysis in Part Two.

The three examples summarised here – Miyazaki, Coutin and Riles respectively – are relevant to the argument I develop in this thesis. What I hope is clear from these brief summaries is that an interest in ethnographic knowledge making practices is not an exercise in anthropological navel gazing because such practices are inevitably implicated in wider knowledge practices encountered in other social contexts – such as politics. This scholarship foregrounds a set of problems that are central to the work of a variety of practitioners, including Japanese financial analysts as well as immigration lawyers and illegal immigrants. These problems – in these respective social contexts – often produce effects and have material consequences. What requires emphasis at this point, though, is that exploring the ways in which anthropologists make knowledge constitutes a strategy in rendering problematic the ways others out there ‘in the world’ (Riles 2003a:189) make knowledge for themselves, for other purposes.

Where I believe this thesis makes a unique contribution to this scholarship is by focusing on a set of knowledge practices that I broadly group under the banner

‘electioneering.’ Such practices, I suggest, are largely absent from more traditional ethnographies of Britain. Furthermore, following Jeanette Edwards (2000:9-10), I believe the ethnography of Britain has much to contribute to this scholarship because it ‘has the potential both to add to an understanding of the social milieu it studies and to reveal preoccupations that inform a British tradition of anthropology.’ Of course, it would be easy to frame such an exercise in terms of conducting anthropology ‘at home’ (e.g. Jackson 1987). However, as an Australian who had never visited Scotland or the United Kingdom prior to commencing postgraduate study at the University of Edinburgh, I never considered myself ‘at home’ in Dumfries and Galloway throughout the duration of my fieldwork. Nevertheless, training at a Scottish University entangled with many of the national institutions mentioned in this chapter, my academic ‘home’ was already potentially implicated in my ‘field’²⁹. It was therefore potentially quite likely that my would-be informants might use the same concepts in their daily (political) lives, as I would be in my academic work³⁰:

‘When anthropologists and their informants frame their social worlds in similar ways ... it behoves us to reveal how observations that come to be seen as information are generated. In making explicit the process whereby the familiar is construed as such, as well as the way in which the familiar is then garnered to the anthropological enterprise, the process of knowing becomes central to ethnographic description.’ (Edwards 2000:13)

²⁹ Where an anthropologist shares knowledge-making practices with one’s informants – such as political activists (see Dahl 2004, Riles 2001) – one might nevertheless feel ‘at home’ in one’s field site as such practices strike the ethnographer as ‘familiar’ (Edwards 2000:9).

³⁰ This problem has perplexed ethnographers of nationalism in Western settings (e.g. Handler 1988). Others, like Herzfeld (1987), approach nationalist ideology as an opportunity to expose and interrogate the assumptions that underpin anthropological practices.

One of the questions I asked myself from time to time during my fieldwork was whether or not politicking and electioneering constituted a ‘new’ ethnographic object? I will return to this question shortly as well as in the final chapter of this thesis. Here, it is worth noting that there remains little in the way of ethnographic studies of electioneering and political Parties – especially in Western democracies – and only a few exceptions come to mind (e.g. Abeles 1988; Aronoff 1977, 1986; Kertzer 1988, 1996). Attempting to survey material kept in the Ewart Library in Dumfries, the Stewartry Museum in Kirkcudbright and the Stranraer Museum – as well as other collections held in the Dumfries and Galloway Archives – I was also struck by how little existed in terms of the kinds of political artefacts that interested me: Party manifestos, leaflets, posters, minutes, canvas sheets. Unlike Jeanette Edwards’ (2000:67) experience of being directed to local ‘experts’ in specific areas of local history – which is ‘carved up into separate domains of expertise’ – local archivists seemed unaware as to whom I should speak locally about the political history of Dumfries and Galloway. Indeed, one archivist told me that despite collecting all sorts of items that were considered relevant to the social and economic history of the region, he had never thought of retaining ‘political memorabilia’. Another declared excitedly that ‘it was about time’ someone took an interest in local politics, and asked me to get back to her if I met anyone with anything ‘interesting’ in their possession³¹.

Although archivists considered political history important, it seemed as if Politics with a big ‘P’ – the politics of Parties, Parliament and polls, as it is popularly understood in Britain – somehow lies beyond the local archive and, potentially, the purview of a

³¹ Despite this, though, I did unearth one article that analysed politics in Dumfries Burgh shortly after the Act of Union in 1707 (Murdoch 1991).

social anthropologist³². Politics understood in this way bears similarities to other kinds of ‘objects’ that anthropologists have sought to apprehend ethnographically in recent years, one example relevant to my discussion of devolution earlier in this chapter being ‘the State’ (Bornemann 1992:5).

In describing the efforts of political practitioners engaged in electioneering (amongst other practices), it is perhaps not surprising that I turned to a growing literature on various kinds of ‘instruments’ for theoretical inspiration. Instruments have been explored in a number of different kinds of studies: of auditing (Strathern 2000), financial markets (Miyazaki 2003) and – potentially the one that is most relevant to this thesis, albeit implicitly – networking (Riles 2001).

‘New’ ethnographic objects

So can the practices described in this thesis and that I broadly regard as being about electioneering be described as constituting a ‘new’ ethnographic object? Furthermore, what are the consequences of focusing on such practices for ethnographic writing more generally and, in particular, for the construction of this thesis?

Almost inevitably, when one becomes entangled with a set of practices that are designed to produce massive amounts of documents – surveys, press releases, leaflets and target letters, as I describe in Chapter Six – one shares with one’s informants an experience that is best described as a kind of *narrowing* of focus and vision. A significant amount of time and energy – indeed, probably most of the time and energy – of the political activists I studied was devoted to organising in the run-up to what often

³² Alternatively, perhaps the knowledge practices of academics and political activists are not, in fact, ‘worlds apart’ and, for that reason, it is easy for anthropologists to ‘overlook’ such practices

seemed very small events and crises of a bureaucrat's making. Ostensibly, this thesis deals with two 'larger' events – a public inquiry and an election – but the build-up (and aftermath) of these were punctuated by many smaller events, including committee meetings, newspaper deadlines, the occasional altercation with a rival political activist, or even a road trip to canvas a neighbouring village. The importance of these smaller events is hardly apparent when taken on their own. They become amplified, however, by their location in the wider *flow* of events so much so that their significance to an anthropological audience might appear comical, or even ludicrous.

Indeed, such a focus is likely to raise awkward questions (for anthropology) about scale. Sometimes the evidence upon which the claims of activists would turn seemed especially 'thin' despite the fact that one consequence of such claims was often the investment of huge amounts of activist time, energy and resources. What I describe is a plane of political activism where, for example, the negative impact of a broken riso-graph machine is likely to demand a more immediate response and will take precedence over wider questions of Conservative Party ideology and policy in Scotland. As a result, I would suggest that the ethnographer can never make straightforward assumptions about questions of scale and extrapolate too much from the small events described here that is relevant to social relations in a field site like Dumfries and Galloway more generally.

In pursuing this research, I took my cues from the political activists who constitute the ethnographic subjects of this study. I very much wanted to foreground what it is that political activists actually do. My analysis, then, largely focuses on these small events. From my informants, I appropriate another 'object' for analytical purposes – an object I will abstractly call the 'political instrument'. These instruments refer to a

as being of ethnographic interest (Maurer 2002, Riles 2002).

range of discursive material into which activists invested time and energy on the assumption that these materials were able to produce instrumental effects, particularly during an election campaign. What was important about these instruments was the way in which they gripped the imaginations of my informants so that, in the thick of a bitterly fought election, the formatting of a survey or the visual aesthetic of a leaflet demanded far more discussion than other issues that might otherwise interest anthropologists and other social scientists (such as identity). Under these circumstances, questions of form came to dominate others that might have otherwise been considered vital to a political campaign, such as philosophy, policy and even strategy.

Importantly, these instruments produced one, very important effect, at least from the perspective of the political activists considered here: namely, they brought the Conservative Party campaign into view as a discursive artefact or object. Like policy (cf. Shore and Wright 1997, Wright 1994), this campaign should be understood as possessing a social life that, in the lead-up to the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections in Dumfries and Galloway, only lasted for a handful of months and came to a quick and quiet end in the dying hours of Polling Day. This campaign needs to be understood as constituting a different analytical object to others that might otherwise attract ethnographic interest – such as a community (like Dumfries) or an institution (like the Conservative Party itself) – although as an object for anthropological analysis, a consideration of the political campaign described in this thesis cannot proceed without some consideration of these other objects. However, my focus remains how these political instruments served to bring into view an ethnographic object – a campaign – that in turn provided a location in which ‘the lesser-spotted Tory’ could be apprehended (by

the analyst and the political activist alike). I suggest that a political campaign in a Parliamentary election represents a 'new' ethnographic object in the sense described above.

It should be noted that focusing on such an object represents a point of departure from what might be considered a more 'familiar' ethnographic approach to the anthropological study of Britain. Traditionally, studies like mine – carried out in small, rural communities – have focused on providing an in-depth and richly described study of social relations. Such studies have tended to use the 'community' as their primary, analytical object. While my own analysis could have been conducted very much in this tradition, my sense while carrying out my fieldwork was that to pursue a community-based study would have led to the omission of other kinds of analytical objects. For instance, much of this literature is concerned with understanding how a range of class, gender, ethnic and national identities is constructed in a variety of social settings. Clearly, many of these identities mattered in Dumfries and Galloway but a focus on such 'constructions' might have led to the preclusion of an analysis of an ethnographic object like a political campaign. While many anthropologists might consider the sacrifice of such an object acceptable in the pursuit of another analytical object, I was not prepared to pursue this end for one very simple reason: the practices that were central to the work of the political activists I studied I wanted to also make central to my analysis. Furthermore, if my informants were not openly anxious about questions of identity, they were certainly very distressed when logistical problems arose in their campaign. The ways in which political activists organised their time and energy around a set of political instruments

that were deployed in relation to small events – often to address crises that seemed, sometimes, of their own making – constitute the practices I foreground in this study.

This is not to suggest, however, that questions of identity were not important to my ethnographic subjects.^{*} Rather, an ethnographic focus on identity inevitably moves other kinds of objects to the background. My approach here, then, is to foreground social practices that in the more traditional ethnography of rural Britain are often implicit – and I adopt this approach in order to analyse other, overlooked objects of anthropological analysis. As a result, I do not suggest that this approach is a superior substitute for the more traditional, community-based ethnography in the anthropology of (rural) Britain. Rather, I offer it is an alternative designed to bring other ethnographic objects into view. This, in turn, extends the ethnographic record of Britain. I focus here on one ethnographic object – a network of political activists that comes to be apprehended as the local Conservative Party campaign during an election – that has been rarely glimpsed in others' ethnographies of rural Britain. However, in doing so, this study is not designed to be the last, comprehensive word on the ethnography of Dumfries and Galloway. There would be much of value to glean from a more in-depth study of social relations in the communities of Dumfries and Galloway. But I leave that challenge for another ethnographer.

Chapter Outline

When I began my fieldwork, it was not clear to me that I would come to focus on the Conservative Party campaign at the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections held on 1 May 2003. Indeed, it would be fair to say that as an ethnographic object, the

Conservative Party campaign had hardly come into view, simply because election planning was not yet central to the work of political activists in the aftermath of the Foot and Mouth epidemic. The chapters that follow, then, map an ethnographic journey through my field site as I sought an answer to the question with which I began: where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge? The first chapter of Part Two – which is entitled ‘The Forgotten Region’ – outlines my field site as I encountered it in the aftermath of two crises: the Foot and Mouth epidemic and the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Here, I draw on the work of Veena Das (1995) and Annelise Riles (2003a) to consider how a notion of critical event or crisis can constitute an object of knowledge, for both the anthropologist and the would-be political activist. I argue that by making crisis an analytical object, one can make an incision upon complex cultural phenomena that otherwise resists representation (cf. Riles 1996, 1998, 2001) before asking: how is a notion of crisis put to work, by whom and with what (political) effects?

Chapter Three focuses on another ‘source’ of knowledge, of which there seemed a disproportionate number in Dumfries and Galloway: local newspapers. Taking up a challenge posed by Lisa Malkki (1995) to address an alleged ‘distance’ between anthropological and journalistic knowledge making practices, I survey local newspaper coverage of the Boundary Commission’s controversial proposals to re-draw electoral boundaries across the region. In the process, I argue that this example demonstrates not just that journalistic knowledge is potentially constitutive of anthropological knowledge; the boundary between journalism and political activism is also blurred, especially when *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* launched its own campaign against the proposed changes. To think through these entanglements between the anthropologist, local journalists and

political activists, I turn to Wittgenstein's idea of the language game (Brand 1979, Das 1998) before extending these observations in Chapter Four, which explores evidence presented to a public inquiry held in Dumfries later that year following strong local opposition to the Boundary Commission's proposals. During the inquiry, it remained unclear what evidence or criteria the Boundary Commission would consider relevant to deciding whether or not to heed local opposition to its proposals. As a result, political activists framed their arguments in terms with which they were familiar³³ that served to highlight the complex and hybrid nature of knowledge and social relations (cf. Edwards 2000).

In Part Two – entitled 'The Lesser-Spotted Tory' – I focus on the knowledge practices of local Conservatives as they organised for the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections held on 1 May 2003. As I argue in Chapter Five, Scottish Conservatives are notable partly because of their 'absence' (cf. Coutin 2005) from national narratives about contemporary Scotland (Hearn 2000, 2002) that equate political 'progress' with the successful campaign for a Scottish Parliament – which most Conservatives opposed. Ironically, with some Tories elected to the new Parliament, the Scottish Conservatives were sometimes said to have re-appeared 'on the radar', although local Tory strategists agreed that, politically, they had fallen 'behind' other Parties in Scotland. They were presented, then, with the challenge of organising a 'modern', political campaign that would enable them to build the kind of prospective momentum

³³ Jeanette Edwards makes a similar point about the 'familiar ways' in which Bacup residents talked about New Reproductive Technologies (NRT); 'in ways that resonate with how they talk about the town and its people. NRT is another context in which they make and break connections between persons, places, and pasts. In exploring the possibilities and potentials of assisted conception they draw on, and refer to, a knowledge of the kind of place Bacup was, is, and ought to be.' (Edwards 2000:37)

(cf. Levine 2004, Miyazaki 2003) that would allow them to ‘catch up’ with – and overtake – the local Labour Party. Here, I use their discursive objects/artefacts – namely, an agenda and two spreadsheets, which disciplined discussions of the Core Campaign Team as it met between January and May 2003 – as a focus for my own analysis.

Chapter Six returns to my discussion from Chapter Four regarding the hybrid nature of knowledge as I analyse a number of ‘instruments’ (cf. Riles 2001, 2003b) that local Conservative Party activists hoped would ‘act’ upon the electorate and improve their chances of success in the coming Poll. These instruments included the survey, the press release, the leaflet and the target letter – all considered vital tools by local Tory activists. I argue that addressing logistical and organisational questions – that is, activist methodology – in the production of these instruments in many ways mattered more to political activists than the ‘issues’ on which they intended to campaign. Indeed, local ‘issues’ better resembled intellectual ‘puzzles’ in a Kuhn-inspired sense (1962, 1977); they were ‘found’ or ‘produced’ as artefacts or contrivances of activist labour and were primarily concerned with demonstrating ‘relevance’ and the ability to ‘make (a) difference’ to ‘local people’. This discussion continues into Chapter Seven, which deals with another question with which political activists had to contend: how does one know one’s efforts have made a difference? Inspired by recent work on auditing and political observation (e.g. Jean-Klein 2003, Strathern 2000), I explore some of the methods that local Conservative Party strategists developed for assessing ‘progress’ – methods that were designed to produce a view of the Conservative Party campaign both in terms of its internal mechanics and external effects (cf. Riles 2000). Focusing on Polling Day and the Election Count that followed, I argue that the various strategies local Tory activists used

to ‘read’ what was happening around them produced some surprising – and potentially unsettling – results, not least because of their inability to predict the result in the light of all sorts of diverse factors – such as the weather.

This thesis concludes with a short epilogue in which I return to the conundrum with which I began: where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge? In the aftermath of the elections – and with the publication of new Boundary Commission proposals – political activists struggled to identify what – if anything – had changed? With much resting on the reading of a letter published in a local newspaper, or a few words exchanged in a car on the way to a Party function, the ground on which anthropologists and political activists alike make deductions about politics and knowledge remained sketchy and uncertain. Yet, despite these uncertainties, most political observers talked of local Tories having ‘bounced back’ at the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections. I suggest that the difficulties political activists encounter in identifying the differences between what might be considered ‘old’ and ‘new’ are also mirrored in the recent anthropological literature focused on ‘new’ ethnographic objects. In the movement between the old and the new, the implicit and the explicit (cf. Edwards 2000, Riles 2000, Strathern 1991, 1999) – that various kinds of knowledge derive a sense of relevance and vitality – for the anthropologist and the political activist alike.

Part One

The Forgotten Region

Chapter Two

Arriving in the Forgotten Region

Reflecting on events in the aftermath of crisis

This chapter recounts my arrival in Dumfries and Galloway on 11 September 2001, a day that has since been marked by the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington DC in the United States. However, it was also the day that Dumfries and Galloway was officially declared free of the devastating Foot and Mouth epidemic. Furthermore, this epidemic had rendered much of what ‘made sense’ about my original field proposal to carry out an ethnographic study of statecraft and political change (Smith 2002) in rural Scotland redundant, or at least that is how it seemed to me as an intern working in the Scottish Executive, watching Foot and Mouth spread at the time.

Working in an office opposite the conference room in which the Scottish Minister for Rural Development held daily press conferences on the Foot and Mouth ‘crisis’ – and despite the fact that I had not yet officially commenced research in my proposed field site – I felt during the early months of 2001 that ‘the preoccupations of the people on the spot’ taking over and displacing my initial ideas regarding my proposed research (Strathern 1999:2). Furthermore, what was left of my field proposal’s ‘motivating force’ seemed to almost completely dissipate (see Strathern 1999:2) in the aftermath of 9/11 as it became almost impossible to hold a conversation with anyone about issues other than 9/11. In the shadow of the tragic events unfolding in the USA as well as Afghanistan and elsewhere, my field proposal seemed somehow diminished and less important, as did the



concerns and issues of others worried about Foot and Mouth recovery in Dumfries and Galloway.

Of course, it is probably not surprising that 9/11 provoked such soul searching. However, one of the corollaries of 9/11 for me personally was that I spent a lot of time talking to people about crises and events during the following weeks. These discussions provided not just an opportunity for me to reflect on notions of crisis and event; they helped focus my mind on new challenges and possibilities for research. As Annelise Riles (2002:189) has argued, 'the discovery of crisis is an example of anthropologists' practices of object making'. If my original field proposal now seemed incapable of maintaining my interest, the events of 9/11 and its aftermath, coinciding with my arrival in a field site that had been ravaged by Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), forced me into the kind of re-thinking and reflection that might have helped generate and make available to my own anthropological project new, potential objects for analysis.

Arriving in the field in the aftermath of two crises – FMD and 9/11 – this chapter therefore explores notions of crisis and event. After considering Veena Das' argument that by focusing on 'critical events' (1995) as an analytical object one can make an incision upon complex cultural phenomena that otherwise resists representation (cf. Riles 1996, 1998, 2001), I outline the impact of FMD on the local economy of Dumfries and Galloway. I then tell the story of my arrival in the field (cf. Edwards 2000:16)³⁴. I was initially surprised when I spoke to local people about 9/11, who I had thought might have drawn parallels between these international events and their own experiences of a major terrorist attack within the region: the bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie. However,

³⁴ Of course, given the events of that day broadcast on television around the world, many thousands of people will also recall what they were doing on 9/11.

I argue that the events of 9/11 provided a number of political activists engaged with FMD recovery with other tropes and metaphors for framing their own experiences, particularly those that highlighted issues of complexity and (economic) inter-dependence. Following Riles' (2003a) call to take seriously the instrumental possibilities of the objects we study, I then conclude this chapter by asking: what role does crisis play in the making of anthropological objects? And in posing this question, I want to foreground the following: how is a notion of crisis put to work, by whom and with what (political) effects?

Of critical events and crises

According to Lisa Malkki (1999), anthropologists have traditionally eschewed the anomalous in their fieldwork, emphasising 'the repetitive, the persistent, the normative – durable forms':

'This foregrounding of stable and repetitive patterns is, in fact, built into what are often seen as the *virtues* of the fieldwork method. We say fieldwork involved conducting 'long-term' participatory research in a 'community' or 'society' and observing people's 'ordinary,' 'everyday' routines and practices.' (Malkki 1999:90)

By focusing on what anthropologists have tended to consider durable structures 'moves other phenomena out of view' – such as 'transitory, nonrepetitive, anomalous phenomena' like events and crises (Malkki 1999:91). In her study of political democracy in India, Veena Das (1995:5) explains that the challenge of trying to analyse 'various transformations in space by which people's lives have been propelled into new and unpredicted terrains' prompted her to focus on what she calls 'critical events'. Events are critical when they institute 'new modes of action' that redefine 'traditional categories';

they also enable 'a variety of political actors' to acquire 'new forms' as well (Das 1995:6).

Das is attracted to 'critical events' as an object of anthropological knowledge making because she believes they provide a useful means by which an anthropologist can make an analytical 'incision' (cut) on a complex, social milieu:

'The terrains on which these events were located crisscrossed several institutions, moving across family, community, bureaucracy, courts of law, the medical profession, the state, and multinational corporations. A description of these events helps form an ethnography which makes an incision upon all these institutions together, so that their mutual implications in the events are foregrounded during the analysis.' (Das 1995:6)

In pursuing such an analytical strategy, Das hopes to 'substitute time for space and to take a critical moment in the life of a nation as constituting the object of analysis' (Das 1995:198). Meanwhile, Iris Jean-Klein (2000) has taken up some of these ideas in her analysis of a group of activists for whom 'critical incidents' and 'events' played a 'decisive role' in the 'cross-subjective performance of self' during the Palestinian *intifada*:

'By critical events, I mean episodes of personal injury deriving from the political conflict, including arrest, detention, imprisonment, abuse during interrogation, and other violations the Israeli regime was routinely deploying against Palestinian subjects... They were critical in that they posed risks and were experienced as traumatic by the persons and families concerned. They were also critical with respect to their decisive role in the cross-subjective performance of self...' (Jean-Klein 2000:103)

It could be said that one of the attractions of critical events as potential analytical objects is that they are moments when complex phenomena that usually remains implicit to social

life is made explicit (cf. Strathern 1991). Drawing on Habermas (1976), Carol Greenhouse (2002) offers a variation on this argument by focusing on ‘crises’, which by definition create conditions where people ‘must improvise with a variety of unexpected disruptions and opportunities’:

‘What does crisis teach us that we must not unlearn in more ordinary times? The answer implied ... is ‘very little,’ since there is so much in the current dynamics of change that makes returning to business as usual feel like pretending not to know.’ (Greenhouse 2002:9)

For anthropologists, the prospect of working in sites of crisis ‘is both inviting and difficult’ because ‘its ground is inevitably beset with unpredictabilities and dissemblings’ (Greenhouse 2002:9)³⁵. However, the key point, I suggest, is that the ‘current dynamics of change’ about which Greenhouse writes result from – and in turn, create – ‘modern uncertainties’ that throw up opportunities as well as challenges for contemporary anthropologists, one possibly being a sense that the discipline is fragmenting and in ‘disarray’ (Greenhouse 2002:28). Looking to crises and critical events might provide anthropologists with a useful analytical object, but as I will argue in this chapter, they are also useful for would-be political activists too – particularly at times when one may not always be sure of one’s bearings. Indeed, in times of crisis, a conceptual incision can be made across a variety of institutions that reveals (makes) diverse kinds of connections – some absurd, some surreal (cf. Franklin 2001). Once such connections have been made, they can then be put to work.

³⁵ Alternatively, the fragmentation of anthropology might appear ‘less like disorientation and more like its opposite: engagement with the world as it is’ (Greenhouse 2002:28). Whether or not engagement is possible with the world ‘as it is’ may be a moot point. What I suggest is important

Of course, many ‘crises’ appear insignificant when compared to 9/11³⁶. FMD, for instance, was first and foremost an economic crisis, although the slaughter of as many as 25 million animals (Franklin 2001:4) was a distressing and traumatic experience for many people. So even if farmers, tourist operators and other small business owners in Dumfries and Galloway were not fighting for their lives during this crisis, many were fighting for their livelihoods. By drawing on one crisis (9/11) to comment on another (FMD) – or, perhaps better, to obviate one for the other (cf. Wagner 1975, 1986) – both the ethnographer and the political activist engaging with questions of Foot and Mouth recovery were able to make their own, respective incisions upon a political landscape of considerable complexity in order to apprehend it better.

Furthermore, while the ‘critical incidents’ that interested Jean-Klein during the first Palestinian *intifada* seemed like ‘diversions from fieldwork’, they had become routine for many of her Palestinian acquaintances:

‘They were routine in the sense that they occurred with considerable regularity; people anticipated having to cope with them. I myself, however, never learned to be adequately prepared for or to feel in control in the face of them. At the time, they seemed to be diversions from fieldwork.’ (Jean-Klein 2000:104)

So ‘incidents’ and ‘events’ – including those that might be called ‘critical’ – can also be a familiar part of the lives of one’s informants, perhaps even seeming like ‘business as usual’. In this thesis, I consider several other events – including a public inquiry and an election – that seem nevertheless routine, the products of bureaucratic effort. This sense

is apprehending the ways in which political activists and others engage with one another in a world *as if* it is.

³⁶ But then Das (1995:5) suggests that the events she describes as ‘critical’ – including the Bhopal Disaster – do not compare to major historical events like the French Revolution (Das 1995:5).

that events can be both critical and routine at the same time – and that talk of crisis is constant – is what I want to capture here.

Foot and Mouth Disease

Rarely infectious to humans, FMD is comparable to flu for those animals that suffer from it (Franklin 2001:4 n.7). Writing in *Anthropology Today* at the height of the Foot and Mouth epidemic, Sarah Franklin argues that FMD became a crisis because it remained economically ‘lethal’:

‘Access to lucrative global markets for both live animals and animal products is regulated through a division between countries that maintain a disease-free status, such as Britain, and those that don’t, such as Argentina. The ban on imports of pigswill instituted shortly after the outbreak of foot-and-mouth was discovered was an attempt to eliminate the route of contagion between these two meat sources, via which the current epidemic is believed to have arrived [in England]. The policing of pigswill is an attempt to keep the global out of the local in order to preserve national uncontaminated status. But the global has got into the trough, the infection has travelled to sheep, and the rest of this tragic story is hardly ever off the evening news.’ (Franklin 2001:5)

Following the confirmation of cases South of the Border, the epidemic reached farms in Dumfries and Galloway towards the end of February 2001. FMD is believed to have spread to Lower Annandale where many farms transport livestock to the sheep market in Longtown, which is located near Carlisle just a few miles across the English Border. In his first ministerial statement to the Scottish Parliament on FMD, the Minister for Rural Development Ross Finnie stated that 41 farms in southern Scotland were under supervision while two farms in the vicinity of Lockerbie and the nearby village of Canonbie were awaiting the results of tests (Scottish Parliament Official Report, 28

February 2001, p4-6)³⁷. In an attempt to contain the spread of the epidemic as quickly as possible, the Minister joined his counterparts in England and Wales in introducing ‘stringent controls’ on the movement of animals. An initial order banning livestock movements for seven days had already commenced on 23 February³⁸. Because of a fear that people walking through farmland might inadvertently spread the virus, the Minister introduced emergency powers that would enable local Authorities to prevent access to footpaths and other land if required for ‘disease control purposes’.

Curtailing the movement of both people and animals was vital to the Scottish Executive’s strategy of preventing the spread of FMD to other parts of Scotland. The Minister explained:

‘I fully appreciate that the measures that we have introduced are causing severe dislocation to the farming and meat-processing industries. The longer the movement ban continues, the more serious the consequences will be. However, I emphasise that control and eradication of the disease are my overriding priorities, and I am grateful for the support of the farming and meat industries for the measures that have been taken. I recognise that, without them, Scotland would be at much greater risk from the disease than it is already.’ (Scottish Parliament Official Report, 28 February 2001, p5)

At this very early stage in the crisis, Government officials were in discussions with the State Veterinary Service, local Authorities and the Police regarding the logistics of launching the Scottish Executive’s pre-emptive cull strategy; the Army was later asked to help too. This strategy was already being pursued South of the Border, where the burning pyres of animal carcasses had already become a controversial and distressing image for

³⁷ The Scottish Parliament debated FMD several times during the year, most notably on Thursday, 21 November 2002. It also featured prominently in a debate called ‘Crisis in Rural Scotland’, which took place on Thursday, 8 March 2001.

many people. The Minister remained hopeful nevertheless that these measures would 'resolve the problems' and 'allow Scottish meat to re-enter the food chain' sooner rather than later (Scottish Parliament Official Report, 28 February 2001, p5).

The farms that had been tested for FMD were confirmed on 1 March 2001 and the epidemic spread across Dumfries and Galloway for the next three months. By 10 May, 176 farms in southern Scotland were infected with FMD, which meant that almost 1,300 farms were affected by the pre-emptive cull strategy. This resulted in the slaughter of more than 500,000 sheep and 60,000 cattle in southern Scotland. According to the Labour MSP for Dumfries Dr Elaine Murray, speaking in the Scottish Parliament:

'Dumfries and Galloway, which has 0.2% of the United Kingdom's population, has endured 11% of the [FMD] cases. Within Scotland, 96% of confirmed cases have occurred in the region.' (Scottish Parliament Official Report, 10 May 2001, p679)

Furthermore, she said the impact of the epidemic extended well beyond the farming sector:

'Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway has undertaken a four-week survey to track the effects on the local economy, the results of which were expected today. I have not been apprised of them yet, but preliminary results indicate that 50% of the region's businesses have been affected, with an average loss of £22,000. Stena Line [which runs a ferry service between Stranraer in the region's far west and Northern Ireland] reckons that its losses now approach £1 million.' (Scottish Parliament Official Report, 10 May 2001, p679)

Stuart Ashworth – a senior economist from the Scottish Agricultural College – would later claim that 18% of the cattle population and one third of the sheep flock had been

³⁸ On 2 March 2001, the ban was extended for another two weeks. This was the first of several

culled by the time Dumfries and Galloway had been declared FMD free (Solway Firth Partnership 2001:6). In light of the massive losses to tourism and other non-farm businesses, the economic cost of the epidemic highlighted the complexity and interdependence of the (rural) economy³⁹. This complexity was obvious, to anthropologists and others. For instance, Sarah Franklin observed:

‘The arrival of the ‘plague’ of foot-and-mouth raises complex questions about Britain’s national livestock management strategy in a global economy; this drama has been broadcast to a world audience in vivid medieval scenes of pyres of animal carcasses. A literally visceral politics connecting the food chain to the tourism industry, the farming community, government ministries, and the national election continues to twist and turn unpredictably amidst ongoing uncertainty about whether the disease is truly out of control, or whether the ongoing mass cull of sheep, cattle and pigs will stem the tide of viral infection.’ (Franklin 2001:3)

Foot and Mouth, then, constituted a crisis in which complexity was highlighted, ‘literally’ connecting a wide array of institutions and communities via ‘the food chain’. Furthermore, the questions that FMD prompted added to the ‘drama’ of whether or not the disease was ‘out of control’. For Franklin, these questions and uncertainties in turn generated connections that are ‘difficult to describe’ because ‘they are often absurd or surreal’; such connections are partial and are therefore sites of ‘significant disorientation’ (Franklin 2001:3). The idea that one negotiates a world in which ‘the front lines are tellingly blurred’ and ‘it is difficult to determine where you stand’ (Franklin 2001:4) is, I believe, particularly suggestive. The image I want to highlight here, though, is one of a

extensions, with the ban eventually being lifted in Scotland on 11 September 2001.

³⁹ There is little doubt that the economic cost of FMD in Dumfries and Galloway has been massive. At the time of writing, the *Dumfries Courier* (Friday, 1 July 2005) reported that it had established from Scottish Executive documents released under the Freedom of Information Act that £178.8 million was paid to compensate livestock owners and cover other costs associated with the cull.

spectacle of complexity – an image that is mirrored in the writings of those caught up in the crisis on the ground.

One example comes from the recently inaugurated Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP), which published the Fifth Edition of its quarterly newsletter *Southern Upland News* in the midst of the epidemic. Under the simple, front-page headline ‘Foot and Mouth Crisis’, the SUP described southern Scotland as being ‘in the grip of a devastating outbreak’:

‘The crisis has already highlighted how closely the farming and tourism sectors are interdependent. It also demonstrates how all aspects of rural life can be affected by a crisis in one land-use [farming].’ (*Southern Uplands News*, Spring 2001, p1)

As in Franklin’s article for *Anthropology Today*, a spectacle of complexity is invoked as the crisis said to point to the interdependencies of the farming and tourism sectors – so much so that a crisis one land-use affects ‘all aspects of rural life’. Other organisations echoed this theme in their respective materials. Following the FMD crisis, the Solway Firth Partnership (SFP) – which brings together and promotes co-operation between agencies and organisations in Carlisle and Cumbria with their counterparts in Dumfries and Galloway – suggested in a variation of this theme that the complexity of the rural economy might also be a source of potential strength:

‘Overall there was a strong feeling that, in all sectors, we will not and should not try to return to pre-foot and mouth conditions, that we should look forward and accept change as inevitable but also as an opportunity. A strong message from a number of the workshops was the need not only for diversification, but also for advice and support for farm and non-farm businesses to diversify and market themselves appropriately and effectively. Stronger links between agriculture,

tourism and local services would help overcome the fragility of the public image of the area, post foot and mouth. The recreation and tourism workshop also highlighted the fact that it is much easier to close access to the countryside than it is to open it, and that more accessible and credible information needs to be provided to the public on the current access status across an area, now and in any situation requiring access restrictions in the future.' (*Proceedings of The Solway Firth Partnership Annual Standing Conference 2001*, p3)

The SFP, then, believed 'stronger links' between agriculture, tourism and local services might serve to assist the rural economy as local institutions and communities seek to overcome 'fragility'. Diversification is central to this view. On this occasion, the SFP responded to the FMD crisis by arguing that the chains which bound diverse industries together and that had served as a source of weakness to them when Foot and Mouth spread should not, in fact, be cut to protect one from the other. Rather, such links should be strengthened; complex entanglements should be further embellished. According to this view, in complexity lies both weakness and recovery.

The above examples would appear to suggest that this spectacle of complexity and interdependence was a metaphor available equally to the anthropologist and a variety of local activists. This was partly because of the diverse work – both anthropological and, as I will argue later in this chapter, political – to which talk of complexity could be put. Speaking to the SFP after the epidemic, Stuart Ashworth explained that Foot and Mouth had highlighted not just 'the unique nature of the disease' in that it demanded 'draconian measures' to control it; it also highlighted the 'depth of change' that had occurred in the rural sector. Mobility, perhaps, best symbolised this 'change'. As one farmer put it, the transportation of animals to abattoirs around the country showed that 'we've been running – we've been sprinting – before we can walk'. While not a new

feature of modern agriculture, the speed and volume of animals being transported throughout the UK was now of another scale entirely:

‘The speed with which animals are moved around the country and the distances travelled [has become a problem]. The movement of animals ... around the country is perhaps not news but the speed with which animals move and the volume of animals moved perhaps is. We must recognise, however, that much of this ‘problem’ has occurred because of changes in the marketing chain for our livestock. For example ... in 1956 there were 3457 abattoirs in Great Britain ... by 1980 the number had fallen to 1282. That decline has continued such that today there are less than 400 abattoirs in the country. Currently around 74 abattoirs control 76% of the total livestock kill.’ (*Proceedings of The Solway Firth Partnership Annual Standing Conference*, 2001:7)

In these circumstances, Das’ suggestion of using critical events as an opportunity to make an ‘incision’ on an entanglement of institutions and practices that would otherwise resist analytical attempts to represent them and bring them into view (cf. Riles 1996, 1998, 2000) seems instructive. But what is an anthropologist to make of political activists’ and others’ renderings of complexity in the midst of crisis? Has another incision been made, a cut in the flow of images and information (cf. Strathern 1996, 1999) that then allows the SUP, the SFP and similar groupings to make of the crisis their own object of knowledge? Riles (2001:18) has described ‘the late modern conception that all phenomena are infinitely complex and that all perspectives are only partial because the same information can be seen differently from another point of view’. While this may be the case, the moment of object making described here also functions as a stopping point for analysis, as if it is enough to acknowledge the complexity of the rural economy. As I argue later, invoking a spectacle of complexity in the face of crisis empowers particular political

claims over others – claims in which anthropologists and other observers can equally become entangled.

To conclude this section, I want to make some comments about the fact that I was working as an intern in the Scottish Executive during FMD⁴⁰. Assigned to the Rural Research Team in the Central Research Unit (CRU), I worked in Pentland House, which was the then headquarters for the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department (SERAD). During FMD, it was impossible for my colleagues and I to ignore the frenetic activity of the bureaucrats around us as they tried to halt the spread of FMD into Scotland. Our office was located across the hall from a large conference room in which the national media was briefed daily on the epidemic. I became accustomed to running into Scottish Ministers and well-known Scottish journalists in the corridor and I would often stop by the room when it had been vacated after briefings to read the large map of southern Scotland erected at the front of the room. On this map, pins identified sites of confirmed FMD infection. Amongst the chairs and tables of coffee and leftovers at the back of the room were photocopied maps outlining the spread of the epidemic, which clearly demonstrated that FMD had been contained to southern Scotland (see Figure 4)⁴¹.

Most of my work for the Scottish Executive involved providing secretarial and research support to two Ministerial Working Groups: the Rural Poverty and Inclusion Working Group (RPIWG) and the Scottish National Rural Partnership (SNRP) Sub-

⁴⁰ This internship had been organised under the auspices of the Scottish International Resource Program (SIRP), which has since been renamed Scotland International. Run by the British Council in Scotland, SIRP facilitated opportunities for international students to work closely with a Scottish company or Government organisation in order to facilitate better international networks for Scottish organisations. I worked in the Scottish Executive for nine months between October 2000 and June 2001.

⁴¹ It seemed to me that in preventing the spread of FMD North from Dumfries and Galloway, the region's status as a 'frontier' had been inadvertently confirmed.

Group on Rural Services⁴². These two Working Groups were scheduled to report on their findings around the time of the FMD outbreak, but this was postponed until after the crisis. With all the resources of SERAD focused on containing and eradicating FMD, the Minister for Rural Development also delayed the publication of the Scottish Executive's agricultural strategy (Scottish Parliament Official Report, 28 February 2001, p5). These postponements and delays – combined with the restrictions on movement instituted during FMD – had begun to render my original field proposal more difficult to pursue methodologically. It was also clear that many of the individuals I planned to meet in the course of my research were now engaged with other issues and priorities. With the preoccupations and concerns of people 'on the spot' potentially lying elsewhere, I decided to take an analytical step back from my field proposal. When I travelled to Dumfries and Galloway in September 2001, I did so with a mind open to new possibilities for research on devolution and political change in rural Scotland.

⁴² Indeed, it was while working for this Sub-Group that I travelled to Dumfries and Galloway for the first time, to meet with representatives of the local Council and various voluntary groups in Dumfries and Newton Stewart, on 12 October 2000 (my birthday). I visited the region again to take notes for the RPIWG, meeting with a wide range of groups dealing with issues around poverty and social exclusion in Stranraer, Wigtown, Dumfries and Kelloholm.

An arrival story

With much of our research agenda temporarily shelved, my colleagues in the Rural Research Team found that we had a lot more time on our hands. My line manager (Ms H.) decided that these months could be productively spent visiting Universities around Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, to strengthen contact with ‘the social science community’. In charge of a research budget of several hundred thousand pounds, Ms H. pro-actively sought contact with social researchers who might be interested in bidding for research monies from the CRU. Armed with a presentation on key priorities for ‘policy-relevant’ research, we therefore visited the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) in Edinburgh; the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development at the University of Aberdeen; the newly established University of the Highlands and Islands on the Isle of Lewis; the Centre for the Rural Economy at the University of Newcastle; and social researchers at the University of Cardiff. Before leaving the Scottish Executive, I also organised a meeting with Dumfries-based academics at the Crichton Campus of the University of Glasgow. This visit was scheduled for 11 September 2001, several weeks after I completed my internship. Ms H. thought that it would be a good opportunity for her to meet academics in Dumfries at the same time as helping me move to my chosen field site.

My day began in Fife, where I had been house sitting for Ms. H while she was on vacation in France. With my belongings packed in her car ready for my move to Dumfries, I had been staying at her house since the tenancy on my Edinburgh flat had expired the previous week. She arrived from the airport at around 8am and, following some coffee and refreshments, we set off for Dumfries soon afterwards.

My feelings that morning were mixed. I was uncertain about what to expect of my new home in Dumfries but I was also anxious about the challenges of carrying out ethnographic fieldwork. I had been making preparations for this day – Tuesday, 11 September 2001 – for several weeks and so for me, our journey began with some trepidation. Travelling from Fife via Stirling, Glasgow and the M74 to Dumfries took us a distance of almost one hundred miles. As we drove, we talked about Ms H.'s recent trip to France and shared the latest gossip from the Scottish Executive. But as we neared the small village of Moffat – located near the M74 twenty miles northeast of Dumfries – we passed a road sign telling us that Lockerbie would be the next town to which we would come if we continued to travel South down the motorway.

I was twelve years old and living in Australia when Pan Am Flight 103 exploded in the skies over Lockerbie and I can remember that day vividly⁴³. The tragedy made front-page news in Australia; a photograph of the plane's wrecked cockpit lying in a farmer's field is one particularly memorable image I retain from that day. Turning off the motorway and driving along the A701 trunk road to Dumfries, I remarked that while I had never heard of Dumfries before coming to the UK, I knew of Lockerbie. Sharing stories of where we were on the day of the Lockerbie Disaster, Ms H. explained that as a social worker at that time many of her colleagues had been directly involved in the traumatic aftermath of that event. Reflecting more generally on how one often remembers one's personal history in relation to large-scale historical events, I spoke of how my father could always recall where he was the day Neil Armstrong first stepped onto the Moon.

Our conversation about Lockerbie led us to discuss international disasters and events, and we shared stories about people we had known who had been personally caught up in the tragedies surrounding IRA bombings in the United Kingdom and ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East. I also related the story of the first time I had been to Lockerbie. Catching the train from Edinburgh to Manchester in early 2000, it was the first station at which we stopped, an hour into the journey. I remembered that day with surprising clarity because arriving in Lockerbie had taken me completely by surprise. In retrospect, there is no reason why this should have happened, but it had not occurred to me before leaving Australia that Lockerbie could have been located somewhere other than the Highlands and Islands. When the train conductor announced that we were coming into the town’s station, I strained through the window to see some sign of where the tragic events of 23 December 1988 had happened and left their mark.

As we approached the outskirts of Dumfries, however, our thoughts turned to the meeting we had scheduled for 1pm at the Crichton University Campus. Although I had by now visited the campus a couple of times already, it was Ms H.’s first visit. Meeting over lunch with a small group of academics in the beautifully decorated Cairncross Room of the Rutherford-McCowan Building – in which the University of Glasgow is based on the campus⁴⁴ – Ms H. delivered her standard presentation on Scottish Executive research priorities.

⁴³ Deppa et al (1994) believe that the ‘Lockerbie Disaster’ – better known in the United States as ‘Pan Am 103’ – was a watershed moment in the way major, international crises are reported by ‘live’ media (especially television).

⁴⁴ The Crichton University Campus – known simply as ‘the Crichton’ to local people – is Britain’s first multi-institutional site for further and higher education. The University of Glasgow, the University of Paisley, the Open University, Bell College as well as Dumfries and Galloway College share the campus with NHS Dumfries and Galloway, the Dumfries and

Ms H. revelled in her role as a ‘gate keeper’ between the Scottish Executive and members of the social science community interested in rural development. She explained that as someone who was close to the policy process, she knew the issues in which the Scottish Executive was interested at any given moment and she could advise potential researchers on how to tailor their projects in terms of ‘what the Minister wants’ or suggest others to whom they could take their ideas – such as the Countryside Agency or the National Assembly for Wales. ‘If you have ideas, talk to me first,’ she pleaded. ‘Don’t waste your time.’ In addition, a lot of research – including work on National Parks and the Land Reform Bill, which eventually passed the Scottish Parliament in January 2003 – was funded jointly between Government agencies and Ms H. claimed to be able to facilitate relationships across Departments for innovative researchers. She could also ‘open doors’ for local academics seeking access to Government-sponsored conferences on a wide range of issues.

Ms H. explained that rural services, poverty and sustainability were key policy areas that demanded further research. Because the Scottish Executive needed ‘benchmarks’ for measuring progress, such research tended to place emphasis on quantitative approaches even though they inevitably ‘break down’ in rural areas where the population becomes very small. Conceding therefore that there was a role for qualitative methods in pursuing policy-relevant research, Ms H. pointed out that the issue was one of ‘visibility’: if Scottish Ministers could not ‘see’ it statistically, an issue risked being overlooked (cf. Scott 1998).

Galloway Council and a Business Park, amongst others. For more information on the Crichton, see www.crichton.ac.uk.

The academics in attendance included the then Director of the University of Glasgow at the Crichton – Professor T.⁴⁵ – a Research Fellow funded by the Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board – Dr M. – and the convenor of the Health and Social Studies Degree – Mrs H. Two campus administrators were also present – Mr J. and Dr. E. Ms H. challenged the group at her meeting to think about their research interests over the next two years: would they want to apply for research funds from the CRU on rural services, poverty and sustainability? Encouraging them to ‘think outside the box’, she said that they should not be afraid to address some big questions. For instance, Ms H. asserted that the Agricultural Strategy Review, would become a ‘coded’ attempt to ask ‘what are we going to do after Foot and Mouth?’ After all, if ‘the writing’ was ‘on the wall’ for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), then maybe there was an opportunity for a major research project – a ‘think piece’ – that would address where the rural economy might now go, without agriculture.

The discussion then turned to other topics, such as the delivery of rural services like education in sparsely populated areas. Ms H. highlighted in her discussion that there was a need to study ‘practical examples’ given that many rural communities had grown ‘cynical’ of politicians. This, she said, was not really surprising, though:

‘The Minister likes to be up there, announcing things. That’s what Ministers do – especially Liberal Democrat ones.’

⁴⁵ I would later learn that this individual was an important local opinion-former in his own right. ‘I’m a ‘blue skies’ kind of guy,’ he once told one of my informants, highlighting his interest in ‘vision’ and ‘ideas’ rather than the banalities of bureaucracy and detail.

Although the Scottish Executive remained interested in ‘some theoretical work’ – most notably in the area of ‘evidence-based policy’ – Ms H. explained that most of the research they commissioned was, in her view, ‘political.’ She stated:

‘We don’t call it ‘good’ or ‘best’ practice anymore – just ‘innovative’. We don’t care if they’re good or bad, just as long as they’re new ... We’re doing political research.’

These off-hand remarks were part of the informal, presentational style of my Scottish Executive colleague but they revealed a cynicism that was probably shared by others in the room. There was further discussion about delivering ‘sensitive’ services to so-called ‘equality groups’ – such as drug addicts, gays and lesbians, the disabled, ethnic minorities and young people – in rural Scotland: a proposition considered ‘challenging’ in so-called ‘face-to-face’ communities. Responding to her candour, some of those present turned to more specific research ideas and some of the national and international connections that could be fostered with the help of Ms H. and her Rural Research Team.

Professor T., for instance, took this opportunity to tell Ms H. that in Dumfries and Galloway, there were a variety of local groups interested in issues of FMD recovery. One was called Food Chain 2001, one of the organisers of which was a Glasgow veterinary surgeon who had contacts with Stockholm-based experts interested in safe, ethical and sustainable rural economies; they were planning to hold a plenary session with delegates from the Swedish Government. In addition, Professor T. mentioned four Local Rural Partnerships (LRPs), which were based on the four old counties of Dumfries and Galloway: Annandale and Eskdale, Nithsdale, the Stewartry, and Wigtownshire. Focusing on providing ‘bottom-up, joined-up thinking,’ these Partnerships had, he

claimed, the potential to be very innovative by getting local people involved and ‘confirming legitimacy’ upon local and national (Scottish) policy makers in their handling of the FMD crisis. He wondered whether the Crichton might gain some funding to coordinate some of the work of these groups, developing Web-based forums for discussion, or a plenary session that could be chaired by the Scottish Minister for Rural Development. But Ms H. suggested that policy makers might view these Partnerships with anxiety if they became too involved with ‘politics’. After all, policy makers were ‘running scared’, she said; ‘the locals might come back and say: ‘You’re wrong.’’ Explaining that the Scottish Executive would be reluctant to fund a conference if it ran even a very slight risk that the pre-emptive cull strategy was criticised, Ms H. said that there was a need to move beyond the debate about the rights and wrongs of this policy. Instead, social researchers needed to focus on questions like how to use ‘adversity’ as ‘an opportunity’ to embark on new initiatives.

Returning to questions about which the Crichton-based academics felt on more secure footing, ‘niche’ tourism was raised as a promising topic for research, particularly in the areas of environment and heritage. Discussion touched on some of the Scottish Parliament’s legislative priorities – such as the Land Reform Bill – against which many local landowners were ‘positively fuming’. With little research having been commissioned on this issue, Ms H. laughed:

‘A Bill going through [Parliament] is always a good excuse not to do anything ... even if the Bill has been going through for two years.’

Concluding her presentation, Ms H. encouraged those assembled to ‘get into the network’ (cf. Riles 2000). Arguing that academics should engage in a ‘two way’ dialogue with policy-makers so they could ‘break down the mystique’ of the policy process, she said there were many opportunities for sponsoring conferences on issues relating to post-FMD recovery. For example, she said that the Scottish Executive could pay for a conference on tourism, which could focus on the region but draw on national and international expertise. She further explained that the Scottish Executive was keen to ‘grow our own research’ by cultivating a research community North of the Border and local academics should take this opportunity to promote their own priorities. ‘The Scottish Executive will walk in and say, ‘we want this, we want that, and we’re paying’,’ she said. ‘But that’s what Government is like, and you should play one agency off the other.’

Following the meeting, Professor T. took Ms H. and me on a tour of the Crichton University Campus. As we walked from building to building – most of which had been built during the Victorian period, when the site had been used as a psychiatric institution – he recounted Elizabeth Crichton’s failed attempt in the face of strong opposition from Oxford and Cambridge in the South, as well as Glasgow and Edinburgh in the Central Belt, to launch a University on the site in the 1830s (Anderson 2001). Following the closure of the psychiatric hospital in the 1990s, he said the Campus was finally realising Mrs Crichton’s dream.

Ms H. remarked that the campus was beautiful, which seemed to clearly demonstrate its considerable potential. The tour culminated in the imposing Easterbrook Hall, a large building that could seat up to 350 people that Professor T. explained was an

ideal conference venue⁴⁶. As we stood in the auditorium discussing the architectural and other merits of the building, a porter approached us from a door at the side of the hall, which leads into the smaller Gilchrist Room. ‘Have you heard the news, Professor T.?’ he asked. ‘They think a plane has just crashed into one of the World Trade Centre buildings.’

‘Really,’ he replied. ‘That sounds terrible. I hope no one was hurt.’

‘They don’t know much at the moment,’ said the porter. ‘But they think there might have been some children on the plane.’

Thinking little of this announcement, we walked the short distance back to the Rutherford-McCowan Building. Our conversation returned to our earlier discussion about funding opportunities with the Scottish Executive as we entered the building, whereupon we were confronted by a group of almost a dozen people standing in the foyer. None of the members of this group spoke; they were all staring at a television bolted to the wall above the main reception desk. Someone near me muttered that a second plane had just hit the World Trade Centre as we too watched the television screen, which was dominated by the image of two buildings on fire, huge plumes of black smoke drifting into the sky. As BBC newsreaders grappled with snippets and updates of two other hijacked planes – including one that had crashed into the Pentagon – someone else told us that all civilian aircraft over North America had been grounded, fighter jets had

⁴⁶ Easterbrook Hall featured prominently throughout my fieldwork. Many large conferences were held there, including those dealing with post-FMD recovery detailed later in this chapter. Following the Scottish Parliament election on 1 May 2003, the counting of the ballot papers proceeded in Easterbrook Hall – although the local Council count had to be moved to the smaller Loreburn Hall in Dumfries Town Centre because a wedding had been booked for Easterbrook Hall the following day. Indeed, being a very popular wedding venue, my wife and I decided we would marry at the Crichton as well!

been scrambled and that President George W. Bush had been evacuated to a secret location in Air Force One. Then, the World Trade Centre collapsed.

A Question of Scale

It later became apparent to me that many of the concerns that would inform my fieldwork were glimpsed in the first few hours of my arrival in Dumfries, which is why I have recounted them here in some detail. This was not necessarily obvious at the time, with much of what I have described initially seeming a distraction from my research – especially a seemingly world-changing event like 9/11. In the days afterwards, I emailed every single person I knew was American or living in the United States. These included old college friends I had made when I studied at Indiana University in 1995; a handful of students whom I had met at academic conferences since commencing my PhD; and the New York-based Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, which was funding my fieldwork. Because the Internet and other telecommunications had been badly disrupted in Manhattan, my messages to Wenner-Gren went unacknowledged for over a week. Meanwhile, my mother, living in South Australia, scanned and emailed to me a newspaper article about an old school friend and fellow political activist from my involvement in the Australian Liberal Party during the 1990s. He had been working as a Wall Street stockbroker and lived in an apartment opposite the World Trade Centre. Interviewed over the telephone, he was clearly very shaken by the experience; another Australian friend emailed me his contact details and I sent him a message as well, to which he responded a few days later, dazed and still in shock.

Not only was the Internet and other forms of communication with the US disrupted by the events of 11 September. All air traffic over the Atlantic Ocean and North America had been grounded within minutes of the first attack, a ban on air travel that would not be lifted for several days. One of the Americans I had emailed was a fellow Wenner-Gren recipient who, coincidentally, had arrived in London on 9/11 to commence approximately three months of fieldwork in England. He had been unaware of the attacks while flying to London but, upon disembarking from his flight, he telephoned his wife before noticing the crowds of people watching television screens around him at Heathrow Airport.

Of course, I was not the only person trying to make contact with people in diverse settings around the world in the days after 9/11. During the weeks and months that followed, dozens of people shared with me personal accounts of what they were doing when the Twin Towers came down and swapped similar stories with their friends and relatives. Furthermore, I met many of my informants during this period, which meant that our early conversations would almost always turn to 9/11. As we spoke about the events of that day and the subsequent war in Afghanistan, I sometimes recalled my discussion about Lockerbie with Ms H. on our way to Dumfries – an exchange that some of my informants considered prescient at the time. But if Lockerbie seemed to me an obvious ‘link’ between (local) experiences of terrorism and the tragic events of 9/11, I was surprised that others did not appear to make this connection themselves. For instance, while having lunch with a small group of Crichton academics a couple of days after 9/11, one lecturer declared that we had nothing to fear from terrorists because no one would target a ‘backwater’ like Dumfries and Galloway. I thought this observation

strange since Lockerbie was less than fifteen miles East of Dumfries. Someone else, however, pointed out that one of Britain's oldest nuclear reactors was located a similar distance Southeast of Dumfries near the small town of Annan. Earmarked for decommissioning, Chapelcross was nevertheless a plausible terrorist target, according to this individual.

On another occasion, I was talking to a young academic with whom I shared an office at the Crichton⁴⁷. Although he had lived in Dumfries until moving to Glasgow to attend University, he had recently returned to take up a job as a Faculty Assistant. I told him of my surprise that more local people had not drawn parallels between 9/11 and Lockerbie, an observation that seemed profound to him. He explained, after all, that his mother was a nurse and that when Pan Am 103 crashed she had been called out to the hospital in case there were survivors who needed treatment. Yet despite remembering the Lockerbie Disaster well, he had not made any connection himself with 9/11.

Around the same time, a carpenter came to my office to install a set of bookshelves. He was interested in the fact that I was born and brought up in Adelaide, with which he had another connection. As he put up the shelves, I checked my email and learnt that someone I had known from the Labor Party in South Australia had died in the World Trade Centre. The carpenter expressed his sorrow at this piece of news before telling me how much watching the attacks on television had shocked him. I then asked whether he thought local people empathised with the 9/11 victims because of the Lockerbie experience. To this suggestion, he was even more shocked:

⁴⁷ The University of Glasgow very kindly made available to me a computer and office space at the Crichton Campus during my fieldwork, for which I am very grateful.

‘You know, I live in Lockerbie and remember that night clearly. I remember seeing the valley fill up with the lights of emergency vehicles from all over the region and beyond. But you know, I never thought of that!’

Once this ‘connection’ had been made – even if only partially (Strathern 1991) – all of my informants thought it ‘common sense’ (cf. Edwards 2000:200). On the strength of making these observations, another young academic at the Crichton asked me to put together a short paper for a public seminar he was organising on 9/11 as the US prepared to invade Afghanistan in the hunt for al Qaeda. Billed as a non-political event, the seminar was entitled ‘*Is It Just War?*’ and was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 8 November 2001. Most of the papers were devoted to 9/11 and included an analysis of the media coverage surrounding the attacks as well as a lengthy presentation on Islam from an Egyptian student. However, this academic thought a fifteen-minute paper on the Lockerbie Disaster would provide a good, ‘local’ dimension to the discussion. I called the paper ‘A Question of Scale: Making justice of the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001’ and treated it as an opportunity to test these observations ethnographically in front of an audience of over 100 local residents. I re-told the circumstances in which I arrived in Dumfries on 9/11, this time not as an arrival story but as a means of introducing Lockerbie as a ‘connection’ on which the audience could reflect. I focused on how Lockerbie featured as a point of reference in regional, national and UK-wide political reaction to 9/11. Indeed, if Lockerbie was absent from the conversations I had had with local people about 9/11, this was certainly not the case when one surveys ‘official’ reaction at the regional, Scottish and UK levels. For instance, in the days following 9/11, Dumfries and Galloway Council wrote the following in a letter to US President George W. Bush:

‘The community of Lockerbie and everyone in Dumfries and Galloway who has been through the horror that terrorism brings send their heartfelt sympathy to you. We are appalled by these acts of terrorism in America. The scale of your tragedy is unimaginable, but the individual trauma of the relatives of the victims and the community is familiar to us and fills us with deep sadness. We received comfort and support from America following the Lockerbie Air Disaster in December 1988 and we want to let you know you are in our thoughts now and in the difficult times ahead.’ (*Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 14 September 2001)

What was highlighted in these comments was an idea that although the scale of 9/11 made it ‘unimaginable’ and therefore unfamiliar to local people, in the individual stories of the tragedy those with memories of the Lockerbie Disaster could nevertheless make a connection. The editorial in the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* echoed these sentiments:

‘The scale of the tragedy which hit America on Tuesday has stunned nations around the world [which] ... has never before witnessed such a number of deaths at the hands of terrorists. But the individual stories of each person killed inevitably carry echoes of the human tragedy of the Lockerbie disaster.’ (*Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 14 September 2001)

That Lockerbie served as a point of reference in local reactions to 9/11 enabled this tragedy to be rendered both familiar and unimaginable at the same time. As a result, 9/11 as an event was made distant to the affairs of local communities, which could nevertheless relate to the individual stories (events) of those caught up in the 9/11 attacks.

In addition, Lockerbie played a mediating role in official reaction to 9/11 at both the local and national levels. For instance, in the Scottish Parliament on 12 September 2001, the Presiding Officer led a one-minute silence for the victims of the 9/11 attacks.

‘Colleagues,’ he said:

‘...[At] the turn of the century, we looked back at the episodes of carnage caused by human warfare in the trenches of the first world war in Europe, by the atom bombs in Japan and by so many other causes, and we seemed determined to create a more civilised global society in the 21st century. However, what happened yesterday brought a new dimension of indiscriminate terror and suffering into our world. It dwarfed the traumatic tragedy that we in Scotland experienced over Lockerbie 10 years ago. That is why the party leaders were right yesterday evening readily to agree that it would be unthinkable that we should meet today in this democratic forum and carry on as though what happened did not concern us.’ (Scottish Parliament Official Report, 12 September 2001)

There is an important difference here between the ways in which Lockerbie served to make 9/11 both familiar and unimaginable in the previous two local reactions and the role it plays here, which seems specifically to render the World Trade Centre attacks distant. After all, claimed the Presiding Officer, 9/11 ‘brought a new dimension of indiscriminate terror and suffering into our world’ as it ‘dwarfed’ the Lockerbie Disaster. However, this ‘new dimension’ of violence only seems plausible if other traumatic conflicts and events – such as the First World War and the dropping of atom bombs on Japan – are credited as being very much phenomenon of the twentieth century. 9/11, in this formulation, signalled an end to an alleged optimism with which people approached the twenty-first century in the hope of building a ‘more civilised’ global society. This is a theme to which Prime Minister Tony Blair seemed to also allude when he addressed the House of Commons two days later, describing 9/11 as ‘a tragedy of epoch making proportions’:

‘Because the World Trade Centre was the home of many big financial firms, and because many of their employees are British, whoever committed these acts of terrorism will have murdered at least a hundred British citizens, maybe many more... To underline the scale of the loss, we can think back to some of the appalling tragedies that the House has spoken of in the recent past. We can recall the grief aroused by the tragedy at Lockerbie, in which 270 people were killed, 44

of them British. In Omagh, the last terrorist incident to lead to a recall of Parliament, 29 people lost their lives – each life lost a tragedy; each one of these events a nightmare for our country. But the death toll that we are confronting here is of a different order... [We] are talking about a tragedy of epoch making proportions. As the scale of the calamity becomes clearer, I fear that there will be many a community in our country where heartbroken families are grieving the loss of a loved one.’ (Hansard, 14 September 2001)

Interestingly, Prime Minister Blair not only referenced Lockerbie on this occasion but other terrorist attacks on British soil as well, most recently the Omagh bombing. But both of these tragedies – in which 44 and 29 UK citizens lost their lives respectively – underscored the fact that 9/11 was ‘a calamity’ on a scale ‘of a different order’, partly because at least 100 British subjects were killed in the World Trade Centre attacks. Despite these points, however, Lockerbie appears to function in the Prime Minister’s speech to both distance the events of 9/11 at the same time as render the individual stories of that tragedy familiar as he feared ‘many a community in our country’ would contain ‘heartbroken families ... grieving the loss of a loved one’.

If links act to mediate or ‘afford passage’ between different entities, and if any entity ‘can serve as a link for another’ (Edwards and Strathern 1999:153; cf. Edwards 1993:51-3), I suggest here that the Lockerbie Disaster became a (partial) connection that enabled the distance between the ‘local’ and the international events of 9/11 to be mediated. Lockerbie certainly allowed political leaders to connect ‘up’, so to speak, with a tragedy of ‘epoch making proportions’. However, what the Lockerbie Disaster also allowed was for this link to be made in one direction as the scale of 9/11 was ‘of a different order’. So while local people might find ‘echoes’ of Lockerbie in the ‘individual stories’ of what happened on 9/11, the attacks of that day remained a ‘safe’ distance from those living in a so-called ‘backwater’ like Dumfries and Galloway.

In the aftermath of two crises

If 9/11 seemed distant to many local people living in ‘the Forgotten Region’ – and if the Lockerbie Disaster became an appropriate metaphor for mediating this distance – it does not necessarily follow that 9/11 was unimportant to local people, even if their concerns lay elsewhere. Indeed, I want to now argue that 9/11 itself provided a source of metaphor and imagery by which a number of political activists concerned with post-FMD recovery were able to talk about their own experience of crisis, with a renewed sense of urgency.

In Chapter One, I argued that many local people believe they are ignored by policy-makers based in the Central Belt, who tend to view the interests of rural Scotland as synonymous with those of the Highlands and Islands. As a result, Dumfries and Galloway is not just ‘forgotten’ in the way that many living in rural Britain consider themselves marginal to mainstream British culture (Edwards 2000); many residents of Dumfries and Galloway consider the region a *truly* forgotten place – marginal even to Scotland’s margins (cf. Green 2005). One of the reasons for – and consequences of – the region being forgotten is thought to be that Dumfries and Galloway ‘lacks’ certain characteristics and vital assets. This came out particularly forcefully during an afternoon workshop at the Annual Meeting of the SUP, held on 8 October 2001 at Easterbrook Hall. Discussing post-FMD recovery, participants agreed that defining the Southern Uplands was not an easy task given the number of local Authorities encompassed by the area⁴⁸ and the plethora of ‘key players’ involved: Scottish Enterprise, Community Councils, the Federation of Small Businesses, holiday home owners, hoteliers, tenant farmers,

⁴⁸ Those that were mentioned during the discussion included Dumfries and Galloway, the Scottish Borders, East and South Ayrshire as well as East Lothian.

landowners, local Authorities, farmers, the Buccleuch Estate, the Forestry Commission and private forestry owners, to name just a few.

Covering about one sixth of the area of Scotland and bound by the English Border in the South and the industrialised Central Belt to the North, participants felt that the Southern Uplands lacked an 'identity' so that local communities in Dumfries and Galloway did not identify with those in the Scottish Borders and elsewhere, and vice versa. 'People have different understandings of the Southern Uplands' because of the size and diversity of the area and the mix of people and communities, explained one participant; there were also clear differences between remote Upland valley communities and those in Lowland areas. As another participant put it: 'The Southern Uplands exists as rock, but not in people's minds.'

To address this problem, participants thought it was important to 'create' a Southern Uplands identity so that they could then promote awareness of their problems to policy-makers and others outwith the area. To create this identity, local communities had to overcome several barriers that were expressed in terms of what was lacking in southern Scotland: political awareness and an intellectual (University) base; accountability in terms of delivering services across the region; and infrastructure⁴⁹. One participant said that what local communities lacked was an appreciation that they shared a problem – that being one of 'identity'⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ One participant pointed out that southern Scotland has the poorest railway and public transport links in Europe, which creates a 'barrier' between local communities and the outside world – although another participant pointed out that 'one man's barrier is another man's defence.'

⁵⁰ Other anthropologists have theorised about the ways in which certain kinds of objects and identities are constituted by a 'lack'. Aretxaga has argued that Ireland's national identity 'is constituted by a lack that exceeds and escapes dominant representation' (1997:14-15); such a 'lack' contributes to the de-legitimisation of various voices that claim to speak on behalf of 'the nation'. This argument is also familiar to those anthropologists who have studied the national

Following 9/11, to this list of what southern Scotland ‘lacks’ could be added civilian or military targets that would potentially interest would-be terrorists, despite the presence of Chapelcross in Dumfriesshire. However, the events of 9/11 resonated with local people in other ways. Attending meetings devoted to questions of FMD recovery, I quickly realised that some people found in 9/11 a repository of metaphor that enabled them to make other kinds of connections, imbuing their own experiences of Foot and Mouth with additional significance. I will now recall several examples from both the Annual Meeting of the SUP and the Annual Standing Conference of the SFP, which was held a few days later on 11 October 2001, again in Easterbrook Hall.

Over 150 delegates attended both public meetings, many representing the plethora of agencies and organisations that were affected by Foot and Mouth or had a potential stake in FMD recovery. Several dozen private individuals were also present, including farmers, local businessmen and local tourist operators, including representatives of the local Tourist Board. A small group of journalists joined academics from the Crichton and elsewhere in attending the meeting. Several farmers were scheduled to speak at the SUP Annual Conference, including the then President of the National Farmers Union (Scotland). A popular figure amongst many farmers in Dumfries and Galloway⁵¹, the President slated US farm subsidies early in his speech. ‘What’s that all about?’ he asked, arguing that the Americans were in favour of coalition and co-operation ‘certainly as far as war is concerned [but] not as far as agriculture is concerned.’ The next speaker was a Conservative MSP based in the region, a former farmer himself. Although he explained

cultures of so-called ‘settler’ societies (Kapferer 1988, Lattas 1992, Mackey 1998, Paine 1999; see also Gelder & Jacobs 1998,).

that one could not 'equate the agricultural crisis of FMD to the events of 11 September in New York', he nevertheless saw a connection:

'When I saw the dark plumes of smoke rising from the New York towers, I thought of the dark plumes of smoke that rose from our landscape [because of the burning of the carcasses of culled livestock] during Foot and Mouth.'

Whether or not one views this connection as 'absurd' or 'surreal', it was clear from these two conferences 9/11 had triggered the making of all sorts of connections in the minds of participants, specifically in terms of the relationship between farming and the rural economy. 'We need a brave Government,' asserted the Chairman of the SUP, because 'strong rural economies' need 'strong farmers'. 'Have we got a brave Government?' she asked the Conservative MSP who made the above statement. 'No,' he said:

'Our Prime Minister backs George W. Bush to the hilt but when it comes to Foot and Mouth, farming is not even in the top fifteen priorities of the electorate.'

As the day progressed, other connections seemed to appear more compelling in the light of these kinds of analogies, even if they did not make direct reference to 9/11. One participant who agreed the Government should confront the Americans over farm subsidies asserted that 'what Americans do, and what they say they are doing, are always different.' In a small workshop that afternoon, one elderly woman reacted passionately to a sceptic who had wondered aloud whether Britain needed farmers at all in a world of free markets and global trade. 'You're not as old as I am,' she told the younger man,

⁵¹ The then President of NFU (Scotland) lived in Dumfries and Galloway. He was sometimes identified as a member of a small group of farmers who owned large farms in Nithsdale who are nicknamed 'the Cowboys.'

‘and you don’t remember 1939.’ Another participant exclaimed ‘Good point!’ as someone else spoke ominously of the capacity for crises to ‘change priorities’ for Government – an observation that he considered particularly important given that ‘the Government we have now’ seemed determined to commit British troops to war in Afghanistan.

On the faces of some of those participating in this workshop, I thought I noticed weariness at what often seemed like an over-stated discussion of the role of farming in rural communities. The two officials from the Forestry Commission who were sitting in our group remained quiet throughout the discussion; the sceptic who had earlier spoken fell silent for the rest of the workshop. Talk of 9/11, Americans, the Second World War and other military crises never seemed far from the conversation, the conference ending with the Chairman of the SUP declaring that:

‘The last two weeks have been salutary, with world powers working together because they absolutely have to. It’s the same here, locally, where the challenges we face are urgent because we can’t rely on urban sympathy [to protect our livelihoods]. Only we can do it at the local level.’

Such talk carried over into the SFP meeting a few days later, attended by many delegates from the SUP Conference. Indeed, the connections seemed to become even more ‘surreal’. Condemning the impact of burdensome import regulations and a strong currency on British farming in the face of global competition – and on the back of national media concerns about the preparedness of British soldiers for war – one farmer concluded:

‘If you set your prices so high you can’t buy beef for your own Armed Forces, and then import it from countries you know have Foot and Mouth, no wonder you have a problem.’

In what could have been a reference to the war on terrorism, another participant asserted that ‘you can’t win a fight with a moving target – especially if it’s a global one’ before stating that local farmers ‘cannot compete with the global scale.’

As 9/11 was plundered for metaphor and analogy relevant to FMD, the complex and interdependent nature of the rural economy was invoked again as a means of demonstrating the importance of farming. The Convenor of Dumfries and Galloway Council – himself a farmer from the Stewartry – stated:

‘Dumfries and Galloway is dependent on beef, sheep and dairy products, and forestry. We’re bloody good [at adding value to these products]. We still need [the NFU President], we still need the NFU, because our economy will still be under-pinned by forestry, beef, sheep and milk.’

One participant asserted that farming is ‘an industry dying on its feet out there’ as another added that ‘farming needs a strong rural economy and vice versa’:

‘The message needs to get out: healthy farming needed in a healthy rural economy.’

A Scottish Executive official agreed, saying that Foot and Mouth highlighted ‘the role and importance of modern agriculture’ to the rural economy, while another participant spoke of the need to recognise the interdependence of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of rural communities.

What was the effect of all this talk of complexity? Michael Jackson (1989:149) has argued that the ‘instrumental possibilities of [otherwise quiescent] metaphor are usually realised in a crisis’. I suggest that drawing metaphorical inspiration from the events of 9/11 made sense to many of those described here because *such metaphors became instruments* in the context of the FMD crisis. The point is not so much that references to 9/11 created links between the (economic) suffering of local farmers and the tragedy of the World Trade Centre attacks but that these links were put to work. Such links strengthened the hand of those individuals with an interest in promoting the ‘central’ (economic) role farming plays in rural communities at a time when many – including Ms H., who I discussed earlier in this chapter – were thinking about the possibilities of the rural economy post-agriculture. However, by then presenting the local economy as an inter-dependent system of great complexity, other interests and industries become enchained (linked) to the future of farming. Once the links have been made, (political) claims can travel along them (cf. Edwards and Strathern 1999:152). Forging metaphorical links with 9/11 allowed those farmers mentioned here to draw resonance from that international crisis and dramatise their own suffering at the same time as they used a spectacle of complexity to ensnare other sectors of the rural economy so that their claims were able to travel in two directions at once. In other words, the interests of both farmers and tourist operators are mediated through the use of analogy and metaphor derived from 9/11. As a result, the farming sector became discursively empowered in a post-FMD political landscape, at the expense of the tourism industry.

As one speaker at the SFP conference noted, farming and tourism had been engaged in a day-to-day struggle during FMD, largely because of the Scottish

Executive's decision to close access to the countryside as part of its pre-emptive cull strategy. This policy was controversial not least because it extended what was an economic crisis for farming to tourism as well. Many local tourist operators believed they would have fared better had the countryside remained open, even though FMD would have then spread unchecked. Despite talk of one industry depending on the other, much bitterness persisted on both sides. One student at the Crichton University Campus – whose husband was a farmer – told me sourly that local pubs and hotels had done 'really well' out of FMD when hundreds of vets, civil servants and Army personnel descended on Dumfries during the epidemic. It therefore should not be surprising that many farmers at the two conferences described here remained deeply sceptical of calls from the Scottish Executive and elsewhere to diversify into tourism. As one said, 'tourism is not the panacea, it's not going to save agriculture.' Another explained that there was a reason why 'tourism and farming used to be separate in this country: it's hard to run a bed and breakfast on a remote farm.' Meanwhile, in response to those who argued that the tourism potential of the region's natural assets had to be realised, another farmer's wife argued that the only reason why the Scottish landscape was so beautiful was because it 'has evolved, and it has evolved because of farming'. A farmer from Dumfries and Galloway agreed:

'I can only speak for [the countryside from] Dumfries to Stanraer, which is very green, but sheep act as lawnmowers. If we are going to lose sheep, what are we going to sell: brown tourism?'

In contrast, it is worth noting that I only encountered one participant who sought a wartime metaphor to strengthen his argument for more support to local tourism.

Commenting on the fact that so many local tourist businesses were continuing to suffer because of the Government's decision to 'quarantine' the countryside, an official from Scottish Natural Heritage remarked that 'it's easier to close access [to the countryside] than open it.' While many areas were now open to ramblers and tourists seeking opportunities to visit the countryside, it was important to ensure that correct information was available to tourists about what had now re-opened. After all, he said, 'loose lips sink ships.'

Crisis and anthropology

From the above discussion, it is clear that it is important to ask how a notion of crisis is put to work, by whom and with what (political) effects? To conclude this chapter, I ask: what role does crisis play in anthropology?

In December 2001, William Beeman wrote a guest editorial for *Anthropology Today* entitled 'Writing for the crisis' in which he said:

'Since the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, the world has been embroiled in a crisis of cultures that threatens to continue for many years. There is perhaps no time in recent history when the public has more urgently needed anthropological insight. Yet anthropologists' views have been notably absent from the press and from general interest publications. This is regrettable, because there is a silver lining even in crisis situations. At these times, the public is especially willing to listen to experts. I accept this as a professional responsibility, and I know that many anthropologists share my feeling.' (Beeman 2001:1)

Arguing that '11 September has taxed even the best journalists and foreign policy analysts' (2001:1), Beeman goes on to present this crisis as an opportunity for anthropologists to address another one, which is possibly of their own making:

‘In many ways, the future of our discipline lies in making it relevant to the real world. Mead and her colleagues always ‘brought the message home’. In these days when it is so easy for the public to leap to easy attitudes based on emotional responses to crises, the expertise provided by anthropological explanation is both stabilizing and enlightening. We owe it to ourselves and to our society to make the effort to spread the wealth of our knowledge.’ (Beeman 2001:2)

As I argue in the next chapter, I do not believe that it is particularly productive to locate anthropological knowledge as separate from – and in contrast to – that of, say, journalists and foreign policy analysts. However, it is worth noting Beeman’s rendering of 9/11 as a crisis also for anthropology in the sense that the ‘absence’ (cf. Coutin 2005) of anthropological voices in media analysis of the attacks might suggest that ‘the future of our discipline’ is endangered by a crisis of (ir-) relevance. Indeed, others writing in that same edition of *Anthropology Today* appear to believe that anthropologists might have little of substance to contribute to understanding 9/11, despite the discipline’s best intentions. For instance, Richard Tapper (2001:13) – who conducted fieldwork in Afghanistan between 1968 and 1972 – locates himself amongst those anthropologists ‘who watch, with growing cynicism, the antics of the instant pundits who emerge whenever the world’s attention moves on to some crisis’ and who acknowledge ‘with a sense of powerlessness and futility, that their own field experience was limited in time and space, and not particularly relevant to the current crisis’. Diagnosing what could be described as discursive *excess* in the coverage of the attacks, he asks:

‘... [What] was there left to say about the continuing terrors in the aftermath of 11 September, or of their background, or their likely future outcome? So much has now been said, and far more eloquently and with far greater impact than I could hope to manage...’ (Tapper 2001:13)

From both of these discussions of how anthropologists might – or might not – respond to the crisis of 9/11, there is agreement that anthropology's wider relevance to public discussion and debate of critical events in the world is open to challenge. For Beeman, anthropologists not only have a 'professional responsibility' to add their voices to such debate; they 'owe' it to themselves and the 'future of the discipline' to do so. Meanwhile, Tapper views his own field research as 'limited in time and space' and is therefore not a particularly relevant resource for trying to understand such a crisis – even if it leads to a major, US-led military invasion of his former field site (Afghanistan).

Annelise Riles (2003a) uses a notion of crisis to make a slightly different argument. In a recent essay on the reasons why the Law has become an important object for anthropological scrutiny, she observes that a crisis in knowledge for anthropology can also be experienced as a crisis for others. For instance, Riles suggests that the traditional reification of 'groups' and 'group-ness' constitute a source of crisis for both anthropologists and legislators. Such reifications have 'come back to haunt us':

'The failure of the group as an analytical tool is ... one of an excess of knowledge, or signification, albeit of a slightly different kind – an exhaustion with denomination and identification, with endless questions of who belongs where, why, and for what purposes. The objectifications are not 'theirs' alone, in other words. They are also ours...' (Riles 2003:188)

With this problem of excess being as much 'a crisis of knowledge for anthropology as a crisis in the world', such 'crises coincide with, cause, and are caused by' each other:

‘In our collective understanding, ‘their’ crises coincide with, cause, and are caused by ‘ours.’ Each is an instantiation of the other for us.’ (Riles 2003a:188)

Invoking Roy Wagner’s work (1975, 1978, 1986) on objectification, Riles argues that anthropological critics of colonialism (e.g. Thomas 1994) have, in recent years, drawn ‘an implicit parallel between the objectifications of what [has been taken] as an outdated anthropology and the objectifications of the colonizer and the colonized’, which result in acknowledging:

‘... [The] complexity of phenomena and their meanings, the proliferation of symbols instead of their constriction – in short, more signification, not less. Anthropologists responded to a crisis of excess by suggesting further levels, dimensions, and possibilities – by adding more rather than taking away.’ (2003a:189)

Interestingly, Riles seems to be talking about two crises. The first is a crisis in the legitimacy of older, ‘outdated’ anthropological practices that risk objectifying other ‘groups’ in the same way as, say, colonial officials. If ‘the discovery of crisis is an example of anthropologists’ practices of object making’ (2003a:189), then the discovery of this crisis allows for anthropologists to make an object of our and others’ objectifications. However – and here lies the paradox – anthropologists have reacted to this first crisis by *adding to the excess*, which risks creating a second crisis – one of discursive excess⁵². In this way, one crisis is substituted for another – perhaps like 9/11 and FMD, as I have already discussed. Riles therefore argues from a position taken after two kinds of crisis:

⁵² Indeed, Das (1995:179) argues that ethnography is defined ‘by a certain kind of excess or a certain surplus’: ‘Call it thick ethnography, call it fascination with detail. Most ethnographies provide more than the theoretical scaffolding requires.’

‘... [After] the collapse of groups of various kinds (racial groups but also ‘clans,’ cultures, villages, and other anthropological workhorses) as legitimate or interesting subjects of ethnographic inquiry and *also* after a kind of collective exhaustion with studying ‘their’ objectifications and their parallels to ‘ours.’ (2003a:189)

Those who hope to re-centre anthropological knowledge by analytically focusing on the Law, then, are confronted with both a challenge and an opportunity ‘to demonstrate its relevance to a new, postgroups, postculture world’ (Riles 2003a:190). Riles suggests anthropologists might respond to this challenge by trying to apprehend the instrumental possibilities of the Law. This is an argument to which I return in Chapters Five and Six in relation to a number of discursive instruments that Conservative Party activists used in their campaign.

To conclude, I want to recall that I began this chapter by citing Das (1995), who argued that critical events constitute an anthropological object because they allow ethnographers to make an incision on a complex cultural milieu. I have argued here that such an analytical strategy is equally available to the anthropologist and the would-be political activist, both of whom might find themselves caught in an array of institutional and other entanglements. Crises and critical events understood in this way are not strictly anthropological objects of knowledge. Arriving in Dumfries and Galloway in the aftermath of FMD and 9/11, I encountered a variety of political activists who saw in crisis an opportunity to make their own ‘incisions’ on a complex and often confusing institutional landscape. In the case of farmers arguing with tourist operators and others over post-FMD recovery, making (claiming) crisis an object had (political) effects. When making their own incisions upon this landscape – potentially with their own effects

– what might an anthropologist of post-devolution Scotland make of others’ incisions? Strathern’s observation that interpretation functions as a stopping point comes to mind here. Crises demand a response; like law, they can become a ‘manipulable object of use’ and ‘an operation’ that produces (political) effects (Strathern 1996:522). In other words, others’ incisions on complex phenomena in the aftermath of crisis highlighted the need for making connections – both absurd and surreal – which produced a spectacle of complexity. However, that moment of incision – when an object is apprehended as a whole (cf. Strathern 1991) – is also a moment at which the ‘cut’ becomes cauterised – like a flesh wound, so to speak – or *sealed off*. Both the anthropologist and the political activist is confronted with another surface, upon which an image of complexity is etched but beyond which lies even greater complexity that invites further incisions in order for it to be apprehended again.

Chapter Three

Contesting Boundaries

Ethnographic encounters with language games and local newspapers

This chapter focuses on another ‘source’ of knowledge for both the anthropologist and the would-be political activist: local newspapers. In a region of less than 150,000 people, there seemed to be a disproportionately high number of such newspapers. Exploring the role local newspapers play in local politics, I take up a challenge posed by Lisa Malkki (1995) to address an alleged ‘distance’ between anthropological and journalistic knowledge making practices. I argue that if journalistic knowledge is potentially implicated in – and constitutive of – anthropological knowledge, the boundary between journalism and political activism is also blurred, especially when local newspapers launch their own political campaigns in the name of the local ‘community’. The example discussed here of what I call ‘newspaper activism’ is a campaign organised by *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* against Boundary Commission proposals to re-draw electoral boundaries in the region. To think through various entanglements between the anthropologist, political activists and local newspapers, I use Wittgenstein’s idea of the language game (Brand 1979; Das 1998).

In the last chapter, I observed that talk of crisis in the Forgotten Region was constant. I now want to note that local politics in Dumfries and Galloway seemed awash with words: talk, itself, was constant. Many of my informants expressed fears that meetings and working groups – such as those described in the previous chapter –

constituted little more than ‘talking shops’. For instance, shortly before I moved to Dumfries, I visited the town to inspect a flat owned by the wife of Professor T. As he drove me from his office at the Crichton University Campus down St Michaels Street to the flat on the Whitesands, he told me about the four Local Rural Partnerships that he would later mention to Ms H. As if from nowhere, these Partnerships had sprung up along with a plethora of consultative committees, working groups and organisational ‘partnerships’ and were now convening seminars, workshops and meetings to discuss Foot and Mouth so that the issues and challenges vital to ‘taking forward’ plans for FMD recovery might be pinpointed. Reflecting on these many opportunities to meet and talk, Professor T. noted that the various local agencies and organisations driving this public consultation had erected ‘a great scaffolding’ behind which he could not be certain what might be in the process of being discursively constructed. Would all this talk produce something tangible and ‘useful’, or would these Partnerships constitute great, big ‘talking shops’ – forums in which words are endlessly produced, producing nothing more than mere words? As he put it:

‘Who knows what lies behind the scaffolding? Whether what is being built is a glorious cathedral, a multi-storey car park or a public toilet, only time will tell.’

Part of his (then) repertoire, this story was repeated to me on at least two further occasions. In using ‘scaffolding’ as a metaphor for discursive formation – or, perhaps more accurately, for what may be discursively hidden – Professor T. revealed an anxiety that others seemed to share as well: that words inevitably failed to ‘mean’ what they named (cf. Wittgenstein in Brand 1979). This unease, I suggest, was not based so much

on a suspicion that words are a gloss for hidden meanings that are somehow deliberately concealed from view. Nor was this a fear that behind ‘official’ presentations lay ‘hidden transcripts’ (cf. Scott 1990, Greenhouse 2003). My informants seemed worried about whether anything meaningful – that is, anything that might ‘make a difference’ – lay behind words at all. And until one could determine whether words concealed meaning or not, all one could do in the meantime was engage in further speculation (talk).

I attended some of the meetings these Partnerships organised, particularly in Annandale and Eskdale, and Wigtownshire. Promoting principles of ‘Community Planning’, funding for these Partnerships was derived from Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway and NHS Dumfries and Galloway – together ‘the Big Three’ employers in the region, as they were sometimes described. These organisations and agencies also held their own meetings to ‘consult’ with ‘local communities’. I attended other meetings as well, including the AGMs of the Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce, the Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board, and the Elderly Forum. At all of these meetings, I met political activists and officials who seemed to express exhaustion at the seemingly endless production of words. At the SUP Annual Meeting discussed in Chapter Two, the then President of NFU (Scotland) appealed for co-operation between farmers, policy makers and other (rural) interests, drawing a contrast with the alleged activities of UK civil servants South of the Border:

‘Can we start co-operating in Scotland, rather than *talk about co-operation*. Let’s forget the politics; politics is peddled by Whitehall.’ (Emphasis added)

He then went on to criticise the Agricultural Strategy, which the Scottish Executive had just published:

‘[We need to] take up bits and improve it. It’s not the answer to everyone’s problems. There is nothing new here... There isn’t any rocket science left. *I feel all conferenced out.* We’ve talked about this for two to three years. We need someone to take it up and implement it.’ (Emphasis added)

These comments not only revealed a desire for ‘action’ as well as ‘words’ but a view that the relationship between the two was problematic. Others echoed these concerns. A Conservative MSP accused the Scottish Parliament of indulging in ‘a lot of talking’ about FMD, but little ‘sufficient action’. Another political activist, speaking during one of the afternoon workshops, expressed frustration that public authorities lacked a ‘coherent vision’ so that ‘strategies and documents [go] nowhere’. Conscious of such concerns, the Chairman of the conference tried to reassure – to enthusiastic applause – those who attended when she told them that the SUP would not become ‘just another talk show’:

‘I’m not in the business of talking; I’m in the business of doing.’

Elsewhere, I met other individuals who expressed similar doubts and reservations about the production of words. During a large conference on Community Planning held in Castle Douglas in October 2002, one Council official told me, with a hint of weariness:

‘I had to write a few brief paragraphs on rural poverty for a meeting, and it was 4.30 in the afternoon. I was tired and thinking about going home, and I wondered about putting the paper off until the following day. But I decided, no, I would just bang it out quickly – in twenty minutes – and emailed it off. The next thing I know, I was reading an important Council report on poverty and I saw the paragraphs I had hastily written included in their executive summary! If I had

known what I was writing would end up being published in a document that would be made available to the public, I would have spent more time on it and produced something better.'

This Council official – engaged in an example of what Ben Agger (1989, 2004) would probably describe as 'casual' or 'fast' writing⁵³ – seemed to suggest that words were slippery: they could not be trusted to stay in one place. Even the simple act of committing pen to paper for the purpose of composing an internal memorandum risked starting a stream of words that might end up anywhere, in the public domain.

My informants would use many clichés to express this anxiety, almost all of which would end up sounding banal at the same time as failing to convey what I sensed was the real significance of what was – or was not – being said. For instance, to say that 'actions speak louder than words' – a favourite saying amongst the Conservative Party activists I later engaged in my fieldwork – seemed to miss the point when it was the production of words itself that constituted the social activity in which my informants were most often engaged. Nor would it be satisfactory to observe that 'words are not enough' to make a difference, even in the aftermath of a crisis like FMD. Apart from restating what my informants would have considered an obvious point, if it were this simple it might have been plausible to expect some of the political activists to whom I spoke to have put aside the time to devote themselves to other activities as well. Inevitably, much of my fieldwork focused on trying to understand how political activists

⁵³ 'Fast' writing evokes a 'fast' – or 'casual' – reading. In a world of 'fast capitalism', Agger worries that the boundary between 'texts' and 'society and culture' is eroded, so that 'texts are dispersed into the environment': 'They ooze out of their covers and become lives, reproducing the world – quickly – through a causal reading.' Meanwhile, reading 'becomes casual because people have neither the time to read carefully nor the critical intellectual skills...' (Agger 2005:4)

and others in Dumfries and Galloway grappled with language – and how so often words seemed to fail them.

Reading (local) Politics

If many of my informants shared an anxiety about the apparently endless production of words – or what anthropologists might call an example of discursive *excess* (cf. Riles 2001, 2003a) – what might one make of local newspapers in Dumfries and Galloway? I first made a note of local newspapers during the 2001 Annual Dinner of the local Liberal Democrats, which was held that year in Annan. Amongst the sixty guests in attendance – which included local Party activists from across the region and some local farmers keen to meet the guest speaker, the Scottish Minister for Rural Development – was a married couple, which owned the Annan-based newspaper group *Dumfriesshire Newspapers*. As one of the few family-owned newspaper companies left in Scotland, they were responsible for the publication of four papers distributed weekly within different communities of Dumfriesshire: the *Annandale Herald* (the *Herald*), *Annandale Observer* (the *Observer*), *Moffat News* and the *Dumfries Courier* (the *Courier*). With the exception of the *Courier*, which was distributed freely on Fridays in Dumfries, these newspapers were sold at local shops in their target communities: Annan, Lockerbie and Moffat respectively. Often sharing the same content and editorial, their cover stories differed depending on the community in which the newspaper was sold, as would what might appear in the letters' pages.

As we discussed the challenges of publishing four newspapers in an area that encompassed perhaps 70-80,000 residents, I said that this seemed like a lot of local

newspapers for a relatively small potential market. The couple agreed, pointing out that there are more newspapers per capita in Scotland than anywhere else in the world. Whether or not this claim was true, there certainly seemed to be an over-abundance of newsprint in Dumfries and Galloway – although this depends a little on how one classifies a newspaper in contrast to, say, a newsletter or pamphlet⁵⁴. Apart from those owned by the *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* – and travelling from East to West across the region – local newspapers included the Langholm-based *Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser*, often shortened to the *E&L* and read by neighbouring communities in the Scottish Borders⁵⁵; the Dumfries-based *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* (the *Standard*) and its sister newspaper the *Galloway News* in Castle Douglas, both of which are owned by Scottish and Universal Newspapers. Further West, the *Galloway Gazette* is published in Newton Stewart and its rival *Wigtownshire Free Press* – also called the *Stranraer Free Press* and usually shortened to the *Free Press* – comes out of Stranraer. Meanwhile, the *Upper Nithsdale News* – known affectionately as ‘the Wee Paper’ – is produced in Thornhill and enjoys a small but loyal readership in the communities of Mid and Upper Nithsdale: Thornhill, Sanquhar, Kelloholm and Kirkconnel⁵⁶. With the exception of this

⁵⁴ The *Glenkens Gazette* is a good example of an ambiguous ‘newspaper’; printed on A4 paper, it looked more like a fortnightly newsletter. I later discovered that political activists automatically faxed press releases to the *Glenkens Gazette* when they distributed ‘copy’ to newspapers throughout the region, which might suggest that it was considered a legitimate newspaper in its own right.

⁵⁵ The *E&L* is owned by Cumbrian Newspapers, which publishes the better-known *Cumberland News* across the English Border in Carlisle.

⁵⁶ Other local and regional newspapers circulated in the region as well, including the *Cumberland News*. Some were sold in remote areas, without me noticing until late in my fieldwork. Indeed, local Conservative Party activists were taken by surprise when the *Cumnock Chronicle* contacted their office looking for comments from Alex Fergusson MSP in the last days before the 2003 Scottish Parliament election. This newspaper – published and distributed in East Ayrshire – was also read in Upper Nithsdale, a fact to which local Conservative Party strategists had been largely oblivious. This might say something about the tenuous links local Conservatives maintained with an area widely considered a Labour Party stronghold within the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale

last example – which is published fortnightly – and the bi-weekly *Standard*, an edition of all of these newspapers comes out each week. Most would be published on a Thursday or Friday, although the *Free Press* was published on Wednesday afternoons⁵⁷ and the *Standard* distributed a thinner, less-read Wednesday edition. Some also distributed subsidiary newspapers, often targeted to specific communities. For example, the *Standard* distributed a free monthly paper called the *Georgetown News* in the Council Wards of Georgetown and Lochvale within the Royal Burgh of Dumfries⁵⁸; it also publishes *Dumfries and Galloway Today*, which is circulated throughout the region.

Initially, I had been dismissive of local newspapers. Although they provided an account of what was happening in many parts of the region, they seemed almost a distraction from ‘real’ fieldwork. After all, reading local newspapers did not involve talking to anyone or interacting socially with my informants. Eventually I came to realise that what makes all of these newspapers ethnographically interesting is that they enjoy loyal readerships in the communities in which they are published and, as I paid attention to who was reading them – and which sections they would be read⁵⁹ – I noticed that they

constituency – an area that might have been deemed ‘irrelevant’ to an electoral battle primarily waged between the SNP and the Conservatives.

⁵⁷ It now comes out on a Thursday.

⁵⁸ A suburb to the Southeast of Dumfries Town Centre, Georgetown was the largest private housing estate in Europe when it was built in the early 1970s. Its main access to the Town Centre is via St Michaels Street, the site of an infamous roundabout that featured prominently as a local issue in the Conservative Party campaign for the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections.

⁵⁹ One of my informants would sit down with a cup of coffee and read the *Standard* after purchasing it on a Wednesday or Friday morning. Another told me she always looked up births, deaths and marriages before moving on to other sections of the newspaper. This section of the newspaper was a vital source of information for the local Conservative Party, particularly in terms of trying to maintain records of which of their elderly supporters had passed away. Meanwhile, many of my male informants started with the sports news on the back pages before moving to the front to read the local news.

provided a wide variety of (local) people with a vital source of (local) knowledge⁶⁰. The *Standard*, for instance, was well read by customers of the coffee bar in the Rutherford-McCowan Building at the Crichton University Campus and the newspaper was always well stocked in local shops. Stories that appeared in its columns as well as its local rival the *Courier* would be discussed over a pint of lager in local pubs, or at 3pm at the school gate as parents waited to pick up their children. In this respect, reading local newspapers was a distinctly social practice and I became even more interested in the potential role they played in local politics in Dumfries and Galloway.

When I had been attentive to local newspapers at the beginning of my fieldwork, it was primarily as a source of information about meetings organised locally in the aftermath of FMD⁶¹. For this kind of information, I would particularly consult the Public Notices. I found myself regularly reading the editorial and letters' pages as well, which I thought was a useful means of gauging local opinion about a variety of issues. As my fieldwork progressed, I found myself regularly and methodically reading local newspapers from across the region. Usually despite their apparent banality, I carefully cut out and filed stories about local politics that might prove important later in my fieldwork, sifting them for useful 'nuggets' that might shed light on questions of local politics⁶². I increasingly appreciated just how physically exhausting keeping up with this

⁶⁰ Of course, national newspapers would also be read – particularly the *Glasgow Herald* – but local newspapers remained a vital resource and medium for (local) political engagement and debate.

⁶¹ I had also consulted local newspapers when trying to find rental accommodation in Dumfries.

⁶² There is a fascinating parallel here between the work of an anthropologist encountering Dumfries and Galloway for the first time and local Conservative Party activists 'returning' to local politics after their electoral wipe-out in 1997 (see Chapter Five). Local newspapers were not just crucial to an anthropologist pursuing research on local politics; would-be political activists often read local newspapers in the first instance to gain familiarity with local issues considered 'relevant' to a specific community. However, I later learnt that the editorial and letters' pages offered political activists a kind of 'internal reading' of local politics (cf. Bourdieu

endless stream of words could be as my office at the Crichton filled with back copies of old newspapers – a task, so I later learned, mirrored by Conservative Party activists across the region⁶³.

Analytically, one might approach local newspapers in a number of different ways, especially given a long-standing anthropological concern with writing (e.g. Goody 1968, 1986, 1987) and literacy (Street 1993) that has, in turn, come to fuel a growing interest in the ethnography of reading (Boyarin 1992, Fabian 2001, Reed 2002). Anthropologists have also begun to approach various forms of print and electronic media as ethnographic objects themselves (see Askew & Wilk 2002; Ginsburg et al 2002; and also Marcus 1996, 1997)⁶⁴. However, reading local newspapers prompted me to think about questions Lisa Malkki (1999) discussed when she challenged anthropologists to address an alleged ‘distance’ between our own modes of making knowledge and those of journalists. Asserting that ethnographic research methods foreground ‘stable and repetitive patterns’ by observing ‘ordinary people’s ... routines and practices’ through ‘long-term’ participatory fieldwork, Malkki argues that anthropologists inadvertently move other,

1991:152-3), in the sense that they tried to glean the ‘angle’ from which their political opponents might be attacking them at any given point in time. Following an argument Tambiah made some time ago (1968a; see also Schofield 1968), this might suggest that reading is a social practice that pre-empts – or anticipates – writing. As will be argued in Part Two, Conservative Party activists articulated theories of reading – or perhaps listening (cf. Fabian 2001) – that were constitutive of making (writing) the Conservative Party campaign.

⁶³ Local Conservatives maintained interests in the Dumfries constituency as well as Galloway and Upper Nithsdale – both seats they thought they could win at the 2003 Scottish Parliament election. They had therefore been methodically compiling press cuttings since the 1999 Scottish Parliament election across the region. Given that the Labour Party’s efforts focused on the Dumfries constituency while the SNP held Galloway and Upper Nithsdale in the Scottish Parliament, local Conservatives thought that the need to maintain an ‘eye’ on all the local newspapers was a predicament unique to them (see, in particular, Chapters Five and Seven).

⁶⁴ It would also be tempting to explore linguistic anthropology (see Duranti 2001) for perspectives useful to thinking about writing and reading. Furthermore, one should not forget the enormous scholarship in the humanities and social sciences that is devoted to understanding writing and

transitory phenomena ‘out of view’ – like events and crises. While anthropologists ignored what was not ‘stable’ – what was not, in fact, ‘cultural’ – journalists saw events and crises not as ‘distracting’ but as a source of ‘news’:

‘Journalists ... swoop in, ‘cover’ all manner of extraordinary and unique circumstances, and leave with ‘a story’ without any necessary expectation that they will ‘follow up.’ Their movements are dictated by ‘Events.’ They deal in ‘news,’ we deal in ‘culture,’ and news and culture seem to repel each other like oil and water...’ (Malkki 1999:90-91)

Acknowledging that to set up ‘a binary contrast between anthropological and journalistic modes of knowledge production’ risks overly simplifying the issue, Malkki (1999:93) realised ‘how strongly [she] had to rely on journalistic modes of knowing’ when she was following the genocide in Rwanda and Burundi in the mid-1990s. She therefore argues that anthropologists must ‘think about ways of addressing the distance between news and culture’:

‘It no longer seems unproblematic or wise (if it ever was) to assume that anthropological modes of knowledge are naturally or properly superior to journalistic modes of knowledge, or that anthropology obviously, automatically produces more profound kinds of understanding. Most relevantly, it seems important to acknowledge the largely unremarked connections that exist between the two sorts of work.’ (Malkki 1999:93)

Malkki argues for ‘a careful exploration of the actual differences and also ... the similarities between the intellectual, occupational, social practices that the terms *anthropology* and *journalism* name’ (1999:93). Indeed, exploring such differences and similarities seems even more vital if one considers the ways in which (some) journalists

literacy – a scholarship so extensive that any list of citations, no matter how influential (e.g.

have written about their own research practices. In his famous account of the 1972 US Presidential election, Hunter S. Thompson – the then political correspondent for *Rolling Stone* magazine and the creator of so-called ‘Gonzo journalism’ – described the challenge of writing about politics, in terms that an anthropologist might recognise. Covering the Democratic campaign from its Presidential Primaries through to its defeat at the hands of Richard Nixon, Thompson observes:

‘Politics has its own language, which is often so complex that it borders on being a code, and the main trick in political journalism is learning how to translate ... without crippling your access to the kind of information that allows you to keep functioning. Covering a presidential campaign ... you find unexpected friends on both sides, and in order to protect them – and to keep them as sources of private information – you wind up knowing a lot of things you can’t print, or which you can only say without even hinting at where they came from.’ (Thompson 1994: 13-14)

Of course, Hunter S. Thompson is probably not the sort of journalist of whom Lisa Malkki is thinking when she contrasts journalism with anthropology; nor is it likely that she has the kinds of local newspapers described here in mind either⁶⁵. However, that anthropologists should think about the ways in which journalism might be constitutive of our own knowledge practices is an important challenge – to which, I suggest, another must be added. If an anthropologist is not alone in relying on local newspapers as a source of information in a field site like Dumfries and Galloway, other alleged ‘distances’ must also be addressed. In a cluttered political landscape like that which I encountered, how might an ethnographer analyse the mutually constitutive ways in which local journalists and would-be political activists produce (locate) political knowledge? Indeed,

Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Ong 1982; Ricouer 1976, 1981), hardly seems representative.

this 'distance' becomes especially problematic as the boundaries between journalism and political activism are blurred even more when local newspapers launch their own political campaigns in the name of local communities. Drawing on Wittgenstein's theory of the language-game (Brand 1979; see also Das 1998), I explore this question in the remainder of this chapter.

Language games

Wittgenstein argues that language-games are not learned *through* a language, although language is pre-supposed. Like piano playing or chess (cf. Das 1998:179), one just learns them (Brand 1979:108). What I particularly like about Wittgenstein's language-games is the emphasis placed not on the relationship between a word and the object it names or signifies but instead the role a word plays in language, 'in how it is applied' (Brand 1979:109). I suggest that such a view of language potentially resonates with my earlier discussion of my informants' anxiety that one could not rely on words to describe, or express, what was being said. Indeed, the meaning of a word lies in the 'flow' of its use; the circumstances 'under which we learn a word' belonging 'to the praxis of life' (Brand 1979:110).

From this perspective, 'the location of the word in the grammar is its meaning' (Brand 1979:111-112) so that meaning 'is something inherently implicit, unexplicated' that lies 'in the *flow* of thoughts and of life itself' (Brand 1979:116). Locating the meaning of words in a flow of thoughts 'and of life itself' means that one must try to discern 'systems of communication' that:

⁶⁵ Indeed, if one were to focus on media coverage of the Lockerbie Disaster (e.g. Deppa 1994), Malkki's argument might be found to have greater 'local' resonance.

‘... [We] shall call ‘language-games’. They are more or less akin to what in ordinary language we call games... We can also call special systems of understanding language-games. ‘When the boy or grown-up learns what one might call special technical languages, e.g., the use of charts and diagrams, descriptive geometry, chemical symbolism, etc., he learns more language-games.’ (Brand 1979:121)

If in considering ‘the real use’ of a word something is seen ‘in flux’, the analyst must oppose it to ‘fixed’ rules so as to shed light on the ‘flows’ in which a word derives its meaning (Brand 1979:122). Language games, then, can be apprehended *as if* they have fixed rules⁶⁶. The point to highlight here – and which recurs throughout this thesis – is that Wittgenstein’s language-games are grasped as an implicit ‘as-structure’: ‘in a language-game something is always grasped as something’ because it ‘does not arise from a process of reflection’ (Brand 1979:123). In other words, political activists arguing over, say, Boundary Commission proposals to re-draw Parliamentary constituencies in Dumfries and Galloway ‘learn’ the rules of the (political) language-game by ‘doing’ it – reading, writing, engaging – rather than solely through a process of reflection.

Stating that a language-game possesses an as-structure allows the analyst to anchor concepts within the language game – which gives its own ‘ground or reason’ – without necessarily making assumptions about the relationship of the game to social relations more generally, or other kinds of ‘structures’. This allows the analyst to avoid becoming caught up in a debate about whether language is ‘true’ or ‘false’ – or ‘hidden’ and ‘transparent’ (cf. Greenhouse 2003, Scott 1990) – because a concept ‘is at home in a

⁶⁶ Some anthropologists have recently reflected on the ways in which anthropological theorising itself works on an implicit ‘as if’ logic (e.g. Levine 2004, Miyazaki 2003, Riles 2001). Wedeen (1999, 2003, 2004) has also used a notion of the ‘as if’ in her work on nationalism and statecraft

language-game' (Brand 1979:123). This point is key to my argument: the meaning of words and concepts lies in its use within a language-game, which is apprehended as an implicit 'as-structure' that provides its own grounds for making sense. As a result, if the language-games are changed, 'the concepts are changed and with the concepts, the meanings of the words.' Viewed in this way, words within a language-game can be used – operated – like a sign in a calculus; to alter the grammar of such a game leads 'to another game, but not from something true to something false' (Brand 1979:123-124).

I was initially attracted to Wittgenstein's idea of language-games when I started following local newspaper coverage – particularly in the *Standard* and the *Courier* – of controversial proposals to re-draw the boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies in Scotland. Following the establishment of the new Parliament – and as determined by the Scotland Act 1998 – the Boundary Commission for Scotland was asked during the Fifth Periodic Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in Scotland to reduce the number of Scottish MPs from 72 to 57⁶⁷. Over a long electoral history in which Scottish interests were 'protected' by disproportionately increasing their political representation at Westminster (Bogdanor 1999) – so that Scottish constituencies were smaller than those in England – this reduction was designed to 'correct' this 'imbalance'. With the advent of the Scottish Parliament, the need for maintaining this number of MPs was no longer considered necessary.

For the first time, the Boundary Commission would borrow the electoral quota for England – which stood at 69,934 electors – and apply it to Scotland 'as a measure of equality'. However, with both the Orkneys and the Shetlands each entitled to a

in Yemen while for Navaro-Yashin (2002), acting 'as if' you do not know any better is constitutive of cynicism in her ethnography of the Turkish state.

Parliamentary seat despite their small populations, the Boundary Commission was empowered to make further recommendations that deviated from the strict application of the electoral quota. As a result, opponents of the Boundary Commission's proposals tended to argue that exceptions should be made of the Parliamentary constituencies for which they advocated.

The Boundary Commission released its initial proposals on 7 February 2002 for public consultation. In the West, the old constituency of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale would gain most (but not all) of the Royal Burgh of Dumfries at the expense of three Council Wards in Mid and Upper Nithsdale. The Dumfries constituency would effectively be abolished under these proposals, with much of Dumfries merging with the neighbouring Parliamentary seat to form a new constituency called Dumfries and Galloway. Two Council Wards in Northeast Dumfries – Heathhall and Locharbriggs – would join the rest of Dumfriesshire – covering Annandale and Eskdale as well as parts of Mid and Upper Nithsdale – to become part of a new constituency stretching from the English Border to a few miles short of the outskirts of Edinburgh (see Figure 5). Two proposals in particular – the ‘splitting’ of Dumfries between two Parliamentary constituencies and the formation of this new seat called Peebles, Clydesdale and Annandale (PCA) – attracted strong local opposition.

What follows is a survey of the comments that appeared in the *Standard* and the *Courier* regarding these proposals. What I want to particularly note is the melodramatic style of much of the comment from political activists and others. The way the issue was debated in local newspapers reminded me of a pantomime, with the Labour Party and its allies lining up against the proposals, and the Conservatives taking on the role of ‘villain’

⁶⁷ This number was later changed to 59.

by supporting the Boundary Commission's plans⁶⁸. Much of the rhetoric seemed playful, which combined with constant references to 'games' of various sorts – 'a numbers' game', 'a poor man's football' – originally prompted me to think about this material in terms of Wittgenstein's language-game⁶⁹. Grounded within the as-structure of this language-game, even those words, concepts and claims that sounded particularly far-fetched were able to derive (some) resonance and meaning.

Contesting Boundaries

On Wednesday, 6 February 2002, a story appeared on the front page of the *Standard* in which the Labour MP for Dumfries Russell Brown launched a pre-emptive attack on the Boundary Commission proposals, to be published the next day. Predicting 'widespread opposition' to these proposals that would lead to a 'public inquiry',⁷⁰ Mr Brown said:

'The Boundary Commission has simply taken Dumfries constituency and torn it into three, scattering the parts throughout the south of Scotland and displaying utter contempt for the people of the area. I came into politics to represent a community. You only have to look at the names of these new constituencies to see that they have no common community. The idea that people in one part of Dumfries town should be represented by the MP for Stranraer and the other part of the town should be represented by an MP who covers South Lanarkshire and the Borders is a complete nonsense.' (The *Standard*, 6 February 2002)

⁶⁸ Having supported Margaret Thatcher, introduced the Poll Tax and opposed devolution, the Scottish Conservatives were perhaps no strangers to playing a villainous role in popular narratives about contemporary Scottish political history (see Chapters Five).

⁶⁹ My analysis here should not be confused with other anthropological approaches – including transactionalism (e.g. Kapferer 1972) – that have also used variations on the theme of a political 'game' (e.g. Bailey 1970).

⁷⁰ The *Courier* reported these comments from Russell Brown MP slightly differently, attributing him with saying: 'The Boundary Commission have taken the Dumfries constituency and torn it in two, scattering the parts through the south of Scotland and displaying utter contempt for the people of the area.'

Also reported in this article were comments from South of Scotland Tory MSP David Mundell, who did not share Mr Brown's sentiments. Describing the proposed changes as 'good news for the Conservatives', he said:

'I think it will leave the SNP struggling. Their support is in Galloway and not much further. Dumfries town will be lumped in with Galloway as will the southern part of Nithsdale and that is an area of Conservative support.' (The *Standard*, 6 February 2002)

But the *Standard* editorial that day sided with Mr Brown. Describing the package of proposals as 'one of the daftest' the Boundary Commission had ever put together, the editorial argued:

'There must be some sort of logic behind Boundary Commission proposals which would throw Gretna, Annan, Lochaber and Sanquhar into a new constituency along with Peebles and Biggar! It's just difficult to fathom. The numbers game is important given that Scottish Westminster constituencies have to be cut. But that can surely only play a small part in the deliberations. What about the sense of community, the common bond that holds people together... [?]

'Annandale may run in a south to north direction but it tapers out against the mountains that separate us from the Borders and Lanarkshire. There is little commonality between the two areas. And what of the MP who has to look after the constituency? Dealing with one local authority is difficult enough but when it comes to three ...' (The *Standard*, 6 February 2002)

It was obvious that the new constituency of PCA was quickly becoming the focus of criticism that was becoming ever so slightly hysterical, as the editorial tone of that Friday's *Standard* suggested:

'Just how far will the Boundary Commission proposals lead us? Some politicians are beginning to believe that further change reaching down to local authority level

may be on the cards. The words “hidden agenda” have been used. And fears appear to have some foundation with moves to centralise services such as water out of Dumfries and Galloway, probable reductions in the ranks of MSPs and a consolidation of European grants to a new “south of Scotland” area. The general thrust appears to be away from the current regional set up.

‘The prospect of such change sets alarm bells ringing, especially if any alterations to local authority areas were to take on the appearance of the planned Peebles, Clydesdale and Annandale parliamentary constituency. That is a faceless, rural conglomeration. And what would happen to our own police force, fire service and council? Let’s hope common sense prevails.’ (The *Standard*, 8 February 2002)

In an article entitled ‘Border grievors’⁷¹, the well-known *Standard* journalist Doug Archibald argued that the proposals ‘would wipe the Dumfries constituency off the political map’ and ‘could be paving the way for local authority upheaval’. Describing the new constituency as a ‘hybrid unit’ that only enjoyed support amongst local Tories and the SNP – both parties allegedly having ‘adopted a bellicose ‘good news for us’ position in both constituencies’⁷² – Mr Archibald extensively quoted Russell Brown MP, who claimed that the Commission had failed ‘to adhere to its own criteria of ensuring that the constituencies were based on historical, administrative and geographical links’:

‘I would like the Boundary Commission to explain to people in Lochaber and Heathhall why they will soon no longer live in Dumfries but some obscure new place called Peebles, Clydesdale and Annandale. Towns such as Annan and Lockerbie are also part of Dumfries and Galloway, not the Borders or South Lanarkshire where the Boundary Commission has effectively dumped them.’ (The *Standard*, 8 February 2002)

⁷¹ This is a pun on Border ‘reivers’, which were ‘bandits’ who attacked travellers in the borderlands of southern Scotland and northern England during the Middle Ages (Neville 1998; see also Gray 2000b, 2003).

⁷² It is not clear why the SNP were initially in favour of these proposals, unless they saw in the reduction of the number of Scottish MPs an opportunity to cut the number of Labour MPs in

The Liberal Democrat candidate for Dumfries at the 2001 General Election John Ross Scott – who was then Convenor of the Scottish Borders Council – added to the confusion by also suggesting in the *Standard* that there was a ‘hidden agenda’ behind the proposals, which would result in a ‘shake-up’ of local Councils. ‘I think they must have been on the whisky when they drew this one up,’ he said. ‘This new constituency is an incredible area with no identity.’

Even local Conservatives seemed to equivocate in their comments⁷³. The MP for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Peter Duncan claimed that ‘the Tories have nothing to fear from the boundary changes’ before adding:

‘It’s certainly difficult to see the connection between Kirkcubbin and Peebles and we must always be looking to put the needs of communities first rather than playing a numbers game.’ (The *Standard*, 8 February 2002)

The *Courier* reported on Friday, 8 February, that a public inquiry looked ‘inevitable’ in a story entitled ‘Inquiry likely into ‘bizarre’ boundaries’:

‘The proposals would take Dumfries into a new Dumfries and Galloway constituency and float off Heathhall and Lochaber into a vast new Peebles, Clydesdale and Annandale constituency. There has been an immediate backlash to the plan, which would create a Westminster seat stretching from the border at Gretna to the Pentland Hills on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Lochaber councillor Beth Gordon is collecting the necessary 100 signatures to lodge a formal objection and Dumfries and Galloway Council members are expected to support a similar move next week.’

Scotland. By the time of the public inquiry in November 2002, the SNP had joined other defenders of the status quo in opposing the Boundary Commission proposals.

⁷³ Mr Duncan MP made these comments before the Conservative Party officially decided to support the Boundary Commission’s proposals. The local Labour Party seized upon them during

According to the story, Russell Brown MP opposed the Boundary Commission proposals not for party political reasons ‘but because of the damage that would be caused to local identity and democracy’. Demanding that the ‘sparsely populated’ south of Scotland be placed in the same category as the Highlands and Islands, Mr Brown warned:

‘Whoever is elected as the MPs for the proposed new seats would not be representing natural community-based constituencies.’

Like the *Standard, Dumfriesshire Newspapers* supported the views expressed by Mr Brown in their editorial:

‘In defence of the Boundary Commission they had a remit to produce constituencies of an average 70,000 voters. That, however, in our view is simply all that can be said in favour of their plans. We share the view of the present MP for Dumfries, Russell Brown, that as presently proposed the plans will lead to resentment and confusion amongst voters. As the MP points out in a strongly worded statement the changes show a complete disregard for historical, administrative and geographical links. Indeed we are sure that to many the proposals will simply appear absurd.

‘Russell Brown rightly in our view predicts that should the changes go through they will be met with apathy by the voter. That would not simply be unfortunate it would also be a contradiction of the historic and effective link between Westminster MP’s and clearly defined geographic areas. Westminster is no side show and the United Kingdom parliament still has exclusive political control over key areas of our lives.

‘Russell Brown suggests that this area has been disadvantaged in comparison with the Highlands and Islands and he may well be right. Whatever the reason we believe the plans will be met with widespread local opposition and hopefully they will be abandoned after public inquiries.

‘There may be a temptation for some to calculate possible political advantage from the proposals. We would hope rather what is being put forward by the Boundary Commission is judged on its relevance for the electorate in this area.’

the public inquiry that followed when they tried to discredit the ‘lone and politically expedient voice’ of the local Tories.

These arguments were developed in more detail in a longer article entitled 'Backlash against Westminster boundary change blueprint'. Appearing with the sub-heading 'Dumfries MP slams plan for giant constituencies', the newspaper's editor Bryan Armstrong wrote the article himself. Describing local reaction to the proposals as 'mixed', Mr Armstrong observed that the 'most radical of the changes' involved splitting the Dumfries seat between the newly formed PCA constituency in the East, as well as Dumfries and Galloway in the West. As a result, political activists from the major Parties 'were yesterday analysing the implications of the changes on their electoral prospects' while 'concerns were voiced about the potential damage the review could cause to local democracy.' While Mr Brown had been 'most vocal' in his criticism, Mr Mundell was said to be looking 'on the positive side', arguing that the proposed PCA constituency shared 'a common rural character'. In addition, the SNP MSP for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Alasdair Morgan welcomed the changes on the grounds of electoral pragmatism:

'The new boundaries are good news for the SNP's future election prospects in this area. The Boundary Commission had a very hard job to redraw the boundaries given that Scotland will have 13 fewer seats.'

Finally, the local Liberal Democrat Councillor for Langholm and Upper Eskdale Denis Male argued:

'There is no logic to our new constituency boundaries. With so many local authorities involved it would lead to confusion and lack of interest from potential

voters. This should not just be a matter of numbers. A single MP for all of Dumfries and Galloway would be a better option than this.'

What is clear from this summary thus far is that local newspapers provided discursive space in which rival political activists could engage with one another in what I have suggested is a kind of language-game. Local journalists gleaned much of this reported comment from a combination of press releases, telephone conversations and first hand observation, staggered over a couple of days. However, the newspaper articles described here serve to collapse spatial and temporal distance so that a variety of political activists are 'heard' (cf. Fabian 2001) in the two or three minutes it takes to read a short article. Rival political activists are reported as if they are engaged in debate with one another – in the same place, at the same time – such as at a Town Hall hustings during an election campaign.

'Keep our Identity'

On Friday, 15 February, the *Standard* devoted two pages to the Boundary Commission proposals under the headline 'Boundary Backlash'. Across the centrefold appeared a full-colour map of southern Scotland outlining the proposed, new Parliamentary constituencies while an article appeared in the bottom, left-hand corner entitled 'Councillors fear divided loyalty if plans proceed'. This article featured a photograph of Dumfries Provost Ken Cameron and Lochar Councillor Beth Gordon, both of whom are described as being on a 'Boundary mission'. 'A lot of people have told me they are not going to vote if this proposal goes ahead!' declared Provost Cameron:

‘I have never seen anything quite like this. To split Dumfries... We are a Royal Burgh. We grew from the Vennel through the High Street, expanded out to Kingholm, Heathhall and Locharbriggs. We have a population of 40,000 and we are a community. Now they want to split us up. We have to fight this all the way.’ (The *Standard*, 15 February 2002)

Describing the new boundaries as ‘really strange’, Councillor Gordon argued that the boundaries of Dumfries and Galloway should remain coterminous – as they had done for over fifty years. With the local Health Board, Fire Brigade, Police Force and Council sharing the same boundaries and two MPs and MSPs contained within them, she believed that it was important local representatives maintained ‘an excellent working relationship’⁷⁴.

In ‘Battle lines drawn in political protest’ – appearing in the top, right-hand corner above this story – the Leader of the Conservative Councillors Allan Wright pointed out that 64% of the residents living within the proposed new PCA constituency would, in fact, be living in Dumfriesshire. He therefore argued that a ‘more suitable’ name should be sought for this constituency in an early indication that local Tories would support key aspects of the Boundary Commission’s proposals. According to the article, local Conservatives opposed the efforts of Russell Brown, who was seeking a petition of at least 100 signatures – or an objection from Dumfries and Galloway Council – to force a public inquiry into the controversial proposals.

⁷⁴ This argument was highlighted during the Boundary Commission public inquiry. However, not everyone saw the existence of coterminous boundaries as a desirable state of affairs. In a private conversation, one local academic who regularly met officials from SEDG through the Local Economic Forum described politics in Dumfries and Galloway as ‘incestuous’. He explained that a handful of people – perhaps ‘half a dozen’ officials from the local Council, the NHS and SEDG – made ‘all the major decisions’. As such, these individuals knew each other well and in his view local politics remained unaccountable. The question that absorbed him as he engaged with local politics was which ‘hat’ a political activist or powerbroker was wearing – that is, which organisation were they representing, since the same people appeared in many different guises – at

In another article called ‘Public join fight against changes to constituencies’ – which ran down the right-hand half of the second page of the centrefold spread – ‘controversial plans to wipe out the Dumfries seat’ were reportedly ‘slammed’ by local people. Seven local residents were quoted in the story, apparently interviewed on Dumfries High Street, of whom six were opposed to the proposals. For instance, Mrs Burns said:

‘This is an awful idea, places like Heathhall and Dumfries have a lot in common and we are like a community. I don’t see why they want to break that up. This whole idea has been rushed and I don’t think the Government is doing the right thing by breaking a town like Dumfries into pieces.’ (The *Standard*, 15 February 2002)

Mrs Bell asked:

‘What do people in Heathhall and Locharbriggs have in common with people in Peebles in a political sense? Nothing, but it doesn’t look [as] if that is even being considered. It really is terrible news for the region.’ (The *Standard*, 15 February 2002)

Revealing anxieties about the perceived absence of ‘a common link’ between residents in or near Dumfries and the ‘distant’ community of Peebles, this view is coupled with a concern about breaking ‘links’ between Dumfries Burgh and residents of Heathhall and Locharbriggs. ‘How can someone living in Peebles possibly know what the people of Heathhall need?’ asked the Chairman of Heathhall Community Council Paul Garrod:

any given point in time when a decision was taken? This suggestion of role-play further evoked a notion of the existence of a (language) game in my mind.

‘Numbers have been thrown into a computer at Westminster and these proposals have been thrown back out. Why else would they put us in with Peebles when Dumfries is only two miles away?’ (The *Standard*, 15 February 2002)

Echoing that day’s coverage in the *Standard*, the *Courier* printed an article entitled ‘Opposition mounts to boundary changes’, which stated that ‘[plans] to redraw the electoral map of Dumfries and Galloway [were] attracting mounting opposition’. With Wednesday, 6 March, being the deadline for the lodging of objections, opponents were left with little time in which to organise. Nevertheless, they scheduled a meeting to take place in the Locharbriggs Community Centre at 7pm on Monday, 18 February. Four individuals jointly chaired the meeting: Councillor Gordon, Provost Cameron, Russell Brown MP and the Labour MSP for Dumfries Dr Elaine Murray. Because these two local Councillors were both ‘Independents’ who were co-operating closely with the local Labour Party, Mr Brown’s assertions that he was running a ‘non-political’ campaign on behalf of the local community were strengthened. This claim allowed him to suggest his (Conservative) opponents were putting their own political interests ahead of the local community:

‘This is a non-political campaign and I know that some residents have been angered by politicians who have commented that the plans are fine because they are good for their own political party.’ (The *Courier*, 8 February 2002)

From local newspaper coverage the following week, it seems that this meeting was well attended and very heated. In a front-page story called ‘Out of Bounds: Action group will fight commission’, the *Standard* reported:

‘Furious residents of Heathhall and Locharbriggs will set up an action group to challenge the Boundary Commission. The move comes after more than 250 people packed into a public meeting on Monday night when local vented their anger over the proposed changes. There was massive support to back a campaign to oppose plans by the Boundary Commission for Scotland to tear the community of Locharbriggs and Heathhall out of the town of Dumfries.’ (The *Standard*, 20 February 2002)

Commenting in the article, Mr Brown said:

‘The fact that over 250 people packed into Locharbriggs Community Centre on what was a wet and miserable evening just shows the strength of feeling there is from local residents against the Boundary Commission’s ridiculous proposals. There is real anger that a bunch of officials in an office in Edinburgh can simply tear a community apart, even though they will hardly know where Locharbriggs and Heathhall are.’ (The *Standard*, 20 February 2002)

Provost Cameron restated some now familiar themes:

‘It is a stupid plan drawn up by people [who] don’t know anything about the region and everyone at the meeting was ready for taking them on and fighting this proposal. We have nothing in common with the people of Peebles who live over 60 miles away while we have a lot in common with Dumfries town which is one and a quarter miles away. There is a real feeling that if these proposals do happen then people of Heathhall and Locharbriggs will not vote.’ (The *Standard*, 20 February 2002)

Another article appeared in that edition of the *Standard* in which Dumfries and Galloway Council formally objected to the Boundary Commission’s proposals, ‘despite objections from the Tory group’ of Councillors (‘Boundary campaign supported’, in the *Standard*, 20 February 2002). With the Council now joining the local campaign against the proposals, it decided to set up a working group to prepare a case for persuading the Boundary Commission to make an exception for the region and retain the two

Parliamentary constituencies. Depute Leader of the Council Joan Mitchell – who was also Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group of Councillors – explained:

‘This new constituency covers four different local Authorities, it is almost as though it is what was left over when putting the map together. There is an issue here that the Highlands and Islands are a special case and their boundaries remain the same, but this makes no recognition for rural South of Scotland.’ (The *Standard*, 20 February 2002)

The Labour Leader of the Council John Forteath agreed, suggesting the PCA constituency looked like ‘somebody had put a thumb on the map and drawn around it.’ Meanwhile, Tory Councillor Allan Wright declared that the Conservative Group on the Council would not participate in a working group because it did not object to the Boundary Commission proposals.

Both of these meetings were also covered in the *Courier* on Friday, 22 February. In another, two-page spread on the Boundary Commission proposals, entitled ‘Out of Bounds: Use sense in the south’, ‘*Doonhamers*’ had ‘vowed to fight for their identity’ at the public meeting held in Locharbriggs⁷⁵. Called ‘Show of force to combat proposals’, the story stated that 500 people had already signed a petition against them. The article claimed that local residents feared ‘a loss of identity’ if the changes went ahead, with Provost Cameron predicting that the end result would be that local people would feel ‘alienated’ from their elected representatives:

‘There is real anger that a bunch of officials in an office in Edinburgh can simply tear a community apart... As a united voice we should be proud of our town and not allow it to be split apart. We are not a political pond where our only objective

⁷⁵ A *Doonhamer* is a native of Dumfries (see Chapter Four).

is to satisfy Westminster. As a matter of principle and for the sake of the well-being of our communities, it is necessary we make our anger heard.'

Meanwhile, Mr Brown reportedly believed that the proposals would lead to other changes as well:

'I agree with the many people who spoke out against these plans that they will only be the tip of the iceberg and it will not be too long before their community is lumped in with the Border [sic] and Lanarkshire when it comes to health care and education.'

The article concludes by saying that the action group that had been established planned to hold further meetings and had already received support from Community Councils and sociable clubs in the area.

In an article entitled 'Leave the boundaries alone – urge council', the *Courier* reported that the Executive Committee of Dumfries and Galloway Council had decided to lodge a formal objection to the proposals, which would automatically trigger a public inquiry. Amongst those who were reportedly angry at the Boundary Commission's 'number crunching', Lochmaben Councillor Ian Pennie asked:

'Can anyone tell me what Clydesdale and Peebles has got to do with Annandale? They may as well have put us in with Carlisle and done Edward the First's job for him.'

Councillor Gordon said:

'My ward is very upset at this. The strength of feeling against it is immeasurable. I believe the Boundaries Commission [sic] has just been playing a numbers game.'

If the plan goes ahead all of us are going to be on the margins. The great fear in my ward is that there will be a complete loss of identity.'

Meanwhile, Councillor Mitchell expressed anger that the Boundary Commission had not proposed to make an exception for constituencies in southern Scotland, as it had done for areas of the Highlands and Islands. She said:

'We always argue that it is important to us that all our major public organisations share the same boundaries. If this proposal goes through we have two Westminster constituencies, one of which [crosses] three council boundaries and the other, proposed to [be called] Dumfries and Galloway, which bears no relationship to other organisations of that name... We must be consistent and promote the case for the rural south of Scotland.'

The article concluded, however, by pointing out that the five Tory Councillors had refused to back the campaign, moving an amendment to deny opponents any financial support from the Council.

Following these two meetings, *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* decided to launch their own campaign to oppose the Boundary Commission's proposals. Under the headline 'Keep our identity!' the *Courier* argued that it was 'vital' that local communities prevented 'serious damage being caused to the democratic integrity of Dumfries and Galloway':

'The big fear is that the lack of community identity in both constituencies would lead to apathy at future Westminster elections; a weakening of the region's identity and local democracy.'

The *Courier* outlined two alternatives to the Boundary Commission's proposals:

- A) Dumfries and Galloway should be made a rural special case – like parts of the Highlands and Islands – and the present two constituency boundaries retained. This proposal is backed by Dumfries and Galloway Council.
- B) The old Dumfriesshire constituency [sic] should be revived by bringing back Upper and Mid Nithsdale into the present Dumfries seat while adding part of rural south Ayrshire into the Galloway constituency.

With the Council lodging a formal objection, it was now certain that the Boundary Commission would hold a public inquiry. However, the *Courier* actively encouraged its readers to ‘oppose the plan to split the Dumfries Westminster Constituency’, inviting them to cut out a coupon in the bottom right-hand corner of the page, add their name and address to it and send it back to their office in Annan.

In an article entitled ‘Forms flood in for boundaries change campaign’ that appeared in the *Courier* the following week, *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* claimed to have received a ‘massive response’ to the ‘Keep Our Identity!’ campaign. This response included ‘around 1100 people’ completing and returning coupons – which were passed on to the Boundary Commission – plus ‘numerous enquiries from readers’. The article also reported that Russell Brown had called upon Community Councils throughout Dumfries and Galloway to make their own submissions to the Boundary Commission. Asserting that Community Councils ‘are at the heart of local areas and in an ideal position to let the Commission know community views,’ Mr Brown re-stated his belief that the Boundary Commission proposals ‘would tear communities apart.’

Letters to the editor

In addition to the main pages of the *Standard* and the *Courier*, the debate over the Boundary Commission’s proposals continued in the letters’ pages of both newspapers as

well. Some letters to the editor focused their criticisms on the proposals themselves, taking up metaphors about the so-called ‘numbers’ game’ outlined in the above sections. These included a letter entitled ‘Poor man’s football’, which was published in the *Standard* on Friday, 22 February, and attributed to the pseudonym ‘Still Watching’. Written in support of Provost Cameron’s comments, ‘Still Watching’ credited him with possessing a ‘vast’ knowledge ‘of the inner working of local government’ due to Provost Cameron having been ‘a major player in the ‘ball game’ for some time. Indeed, sporting metaphors feature strongly throughout this letter, with Upper Nithsdale being described ‘the poor man’s football’. This referred to the fact that prior to the Third Periodic Review this area had been part of the Dumfries constituency – to which it would largely now be re-joined – rather than Galloway and Upper Nithsdale. ‘Still Watching’ also worried that these proposals would lead to ‘further change’:

‘We all know what happened after two changes in the local government set-up in this region. Town councils disappeared then county councils were abolished and in both instances services became worse and further away from the people not to mention the appointment overnight of highly paid directors of departments brought in to ‘sort out’ the mistakes in a system which was working perfectly well. The decisions appear to have been rubber stamped so far as the boundaries are concerned. Don’t be too alarmed when the next bombshell closes all of the local offices in our region as we know it – where do you get on a bus for Peebles anyway?’

Anxieties about the potential for re-drawn electoral boundaries to lead to other kinds of changes received considerable attention during the public inquiry. However, most of the letters published during these weeks appeared in the name of well-known Labour Party activists and their Conservative opponents. As a result, the letters’ pages became a sort of discursive battleground for rival political activists.

The first political letter appeared in the *Courier* on Friday, 27 February. Signed by David H., this letter began by describing the Boundary Commission's proposals as 'farcical'⁷⁶. However, another political 'target' quickly emerged:

'It is difficult to imagine that anybody sensible could find these proposals to be fair or acceptable – which is probably why local Tory Politicians have given them their full backing. Whilst it will be of little surprise to many people that the Tories have taken a 'What's in it for me?' attitude to the proposals, I wonder if the people of Locharbriggs and Heathhall are aware that Tory List MSP David Mundell, the Tories' candidate at the last General Election John Charteris, and the Tory Councillors on Dumfries and Galloway Council have actually given their full backing to the bizarre plans and described the decision to dump Locharbriggs and Heathhall out of Dumfries as 'good news for the Conservative Party'?'

This letter was the first of several from local Labour Party activists in which they accused local Tories of supporting the Boundary Commission's proposals because they believed that this improved their electoral prospects for the region. On Friday, 1 March, the *Courier* published a letter from Donald F. entitled 'Constituency split makes no sense'. Congratulating *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* for organising their campaign against these 'ridiculous' proposals, he then attacked the stance of the local Conservative Party:

'Given how ridiculous these proposals are, I would have thought that the people of Locharbriggs and Heathhall could have expected the full support of our local politicians to oppose these proposals but judging by the comments of Tory MSP David Mundell it appears not. For Mr Mundell to completely ignore the impact

⁷⁶ Entitled 'Proposed boundaries shake-up is farcical', this letter also appeared in the *Standard* that day under the heading 'Farcical proposals'. David H. was identified to me as one of the local Labour Party's most effective fundraisers. While I have no reason to doubt that he or any of the other political activists mentioned here wrote the letters published in their names, I later learnt that many of these letters were, in fact, 'ghost written' by others. Many contained 'stock' phrases by which it was thought the 'hidden' identities of those who had really written these letters could be discerned. I witnessed several discussions of the work of Labour Party letter-writers during meetings of the local Conservative Party's Core Campaign Team (see Chapter Five).

on local communities of the proposals, by simply commenting that the plans are good news for the Conservative Party is shameful enough.'

'Explaining' the apparently 'deeper' motives behind the local Conservative Party's support for the proposals, Donald F. clearly had two audiences in mind: local people and David Mundell. In addition to constituting a useful, campaigning instrument in its own right, letters to the editor also allowed one to communicate with one's opponent(s):

'We expect our local politicians to support us, so I have a very clear message to Mr Mundell. He has said that he will be standing for the Conservative Party in Dumfries Constituency at the Scottish Parliament election next year and no doubt he will be looking for the votes of the people of Lacharbriggs and Heathhall. However, unless he is willing to back our community against the Boundary Commission's plans to boot Heathhall and Locharbirggs out of Dumfries Constituency, then I am sure I will not be the only resident who will have no hesitation in booting out Mr Mundell's plans to represent [the] Dumfries Constituency.'

The long-serving Labour Councillor Tom McAughtrie also set his sights on David Mundell in a letter that appeared in the *Standard* on Friday, 8 March. Condermning Conservative Party counter-proposals to include other parts of Dumfries Burgh in the new PCA constituency, he wrote:

'It is not often that David Mundell MSP is right, and true to form he is wrong again. ... Mr Mundell's suggestion that Locharbriggs and Heathhall be included with Lesmahagow and Larkhall is, frankly, ridiculous. His other suggestion of including St Michael's Street, Castledykes and Kingholm Quay with Biggar and Peebles defies logic. Mr Mundell and his Conservative cohorts are obviously driven by their cynical desire to manipulate boundaries their advantage, rather than listening to the view of the people. No, I am afraid that Mr Mundell is suffering from a classic example of foot-in-the-mouth disease and the sooner he is humanely democratically culled the better for everyone.'

As if in response, another appeared underneath Councillor McAughtrie's letter, entitled 'Status quo not an option'. Submitted by the local Tory MP Peter Duncan, the letter argued that the proposed changes were inevitable because of the Scotland Act 1998, which the Blair Government had introduced⁷⁷:

'...[If] you believe that the new constituencies will be too large geographically, then your argument is not with the Boundary Commission, it is with those MPs who voted for the Scotland Act in 1998. That legislation created the Scottish Parliament and stipulated that the average constituency size for Westminster would have to increase to 70,000. It is, frankly, ridiculous now to renege on that part of the deal, as is being attempted by Russell Brown MP and Dumfries and Galloway Council.'

Highlighting that the boundaries of Dumfries and Galloway Council would not change and that people living in Dumfries 'will not have to go to either Peebles or Stranraer for services they currently receive locally', Mr Duncan suggested that there were other reasons why the local Labour Party opposed the proposals:

'The Labour Party has spent most of the last four weeks dedicated to designing a constituency that suits them politically. The MP and MSP for Dumfries have each spent a huge amount of time on press comments, press releases, public meetings, postcard campaigns and party political planning. The people of Dumfries deserve full-time representation on the issues that matter; not misinformation and distortion from those spending all their time on gerrymandering.'

⁷⁷ An almost identical version of this letter appeared in the *Courier* on Friday, 8 March, entitled 'Status quo rejected as an alternative'. Conservative Party letter-writers often submitted material to local newspapers in anticipation of hostile letters. It was thought that if a Labour Party letter appeared next to a Conservative Party letter, the two would cancel each other out – whereas if Labour Party letters dominated, then this would carry more persuasive force.

A similar accusation was levelled at the local Labour Party in other letters from local Conservative Party activists⁷⁸. Prominent amongst them was a contribution from John Charteris, who had stood unsuccessfully as the Scottish Conservative candidate for Dumfries in the 2001 General Election⁷⁹. In a letter entitled 'Boundary Commission proposals', which appeared in the *Courier* on Friday, 8 March, he argued that Russell Brown had his own 'deeper' reasons for opposing the changes:

'What is very good news is that Russell Brown will lose his seat [if the Boundary Commission proposals are implemented] and the new constituency will almost certainly have a built-in Conservative majority. Russell Brown voted for the reduced number of Westminster constituencies in Scotland and we all know what happens to the turkey who votes for Christmas.'

Some Conservative Party strategists considered this letter 'unhelpful' because talk of a 'built-in' Tory majority potentially reinforced the idea that local Tories were primarily motivated by their own electoral interests and not those of the local community. They nevertheless felt that the local Labour Party had equally strong electoral reasons for wanting to preserve the status quo. This did not stop local Labour Party activists like Councillor McAughtrie accusing local Tories of trying to 'manipulate' the Boundary Commission proposals to their own electoral advantage. In a letter published in the *Courier* on Friday, 15 March, he wrote:

⁷⁸ In addition, John D. described the proposals as a 'welcome change' in the letters pages of the *Standard* on Friday, 8 March, arguing that: 'The Labour Party has orchestrated a campaign for the status quo which denies the need for progress and contradicts the wishes of their own party in Government.' While not a Conservative Party activist himself, John D. had his own reasons for hoping that new electoral boundaries might weaken the local Labour Party. A former Labour Party member, he had led Dumfries and Galloway Council as an Independent during a period when Labour councillors formed an Opposition to his Administration. Some of my informants believed that the local Labour Party pressured John D. into retiring from the Council in 1999.

⁷⁹ For more on John Charteris, see Chapter Five.

‘As for Peter Duncan’s suggestion that Heathhall be included with Lesmahagow, I think that should be put down to the face he is still wearing his L-plates. John Charteris seems to believe one of the seats will have a built-in Tory majority, I say to him, don’t count your chickens before they hatch. After all, the electorate gave him a red face and a bloody nose at the last election. The Tories would do well to heed the people rather than trying to manipulate matters to their own advantage.’

Anti-Politics

One way in which an anthropologist might frame the political struggle surveyed here might be as one between ‘community’ – Dumfries – and ‘the state’ – represented by the Boundary Commission. Such a view would be especially tempting given that *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* supported opponents to the changes, thus strengthening suggestions that the campaign to ‘Keep Our Identity’ was non-political and really about preventing the ‘heart’ being torn out of a community. In pursuing this kind of argument, it might be possible to argue that, as a community, Dumfries had become a ‘political actor’ (Das 1995:14).

In concluding this chapter, I want to suggest that there are a number of practices at work here – that are bundled together, in fact – that are profoundly more interesting. Firstly, Das (1995:17) has warned anthropologists against ‘valorising’ community as ‘a resource for challenging the impersonal, dehumanising structures of the modern state’ because ‘community’ can be ‘a political actor which seeks to reshape ... control over law and history in the predominantly public sphere of life’:

‘Just as communities need to resist the encompassing claims of the state, individuals need to resist the encompassing claims of even the most vital communities as a condition of their human freedom.’ (Das 1995:17)

Furthermore, Edwards and Strathern (1999:153) have observed that the idea of 'community' remains attractive because of its apparent 'inclusiveness', although 'every such conceptualisation of inclusion also excludes'⁸⁰:

'[The] excluded are excluded by virtue of their failure to be part of something. Of course, the excluded may also be identified by virtue of their own power or other characteristics (class, accent, lifestyle), which set them 'off' from others...' (Edwards and Strathern 1999:153)

I suggest a more useful way of framing this debate is in terms of a language-game where some individuals – including elected officials in Dumfries Burgh, local newspapers and concerned residents – come to be seen to belong to a 'community'. Their opposition to the Boundary Commission's proposals therefore appears 'non-political'. This serves to enact a kind of anti-politics (cf. Ferguson 1990) so that the 'Keep Our Identity' campaign is empowered locally and made more politically compelling precisely at the moment it is robbed of its overtly political trappings. As a result, Russell Brown and his Labour Party supporters were able to persuasively argue that their campaign was non-political at the same time as suggesting that to oppose it was to play politics – just like the local Tories, who they accused of adopting a 'What's in it for me?' attitude⁸¹. Other sceptics of claims that the Boundary Commission proposals would 'split' communities and damage the 'democratic integrity' of the region also risked being excluded from the 'community'

⁸⁰ As Edwards and Strathern observe (1999:151), the 'divisive side' of community as 'a forum of gossip and the generation of stigma' is 'often missing' from academic discourse.

⁸¹ So local Conservatives are discursively 'moved' beyond the community's boundaries. As Edwards (2000:3) has observed, people in Britain are 'adept' at marking boundaries around ideas like 'community', which 'is both an entity and a set of relations; it is both fixed and fluid':

because to maintain such scepticism is to potentially be ‘political’ – or, worse, become a Tory. Politics ‘with a Big P’, then, *stands outside and in opposition to* ‘community’; it is peddled from somewhere else. As such, asserting the right to name certain arguments, predispositions or practices as ‘political’ became itself a powerful, political weapon in the hands of those opposed to the Boundary Commission proposals⁸².

I am reluctant to extrapolate too much from the ethnographic material presented here, particularly in terms of what some might think it says about senses of ‘community’ in rural Scotland. After all, during the early months of 2002, local newspapers reported on an eclectic range of issues, many of which a lot of local people probably considered more important than proposed changes to electoral boundaries⁸³. Indeed, many local people told me during this period that they did not think the changes would ‘make any difference’ to their lives, although everyone to whom I spoke thought there was little ‘sense’ in the proposals⁸⁴. One local Liberal Democrat activist told me she wondered ‘what all the fuss was about’ since ‘nothing was really going to change’ as a result of the proposals. Speaking to me after one of the public meetings of the Heathhall and Lochar

‘Community is mobilized to designate an inclusive set of people and to exclude others; who belongs to it shifts according to the reasons for formulating it’ (Edwards 2000:248).

⁸² In a letter entitled ‘A question of support’ (Friday, 8 March), one Conservative Party activist, Charles A., took issue with the *Courier* for describing its opposition to the Boundary Commission proposals as ‘non-political’, writing: ‘In your previous issue, you published a photograph of ten adults and one child marking the campaign’s launch. Of that number, eight adults are known Labour supporters – including a Labour MP and a Labour MSP – scarcely an apolitical group!’

⁸³ The more important of these issues, I felt, included the ongoing political and economic fallout from FMD; the imminent transfer of ownership of public housing stock from the Council to a private Housing Partnership; and controversial Council proposals to close small, rural schools across Dumfries and Galloway.

⁸⁴ Many thought the proposed new PCA constituency was an example of bureaucratic ‘nonsense’. ‘It just seems ridiculous to me that a constituency could stretch from the eastern boundaries of Dumfries all the way to Edinburgh,’ said one woman. Of course, that the then Galloway and Upper Nithsdale constituency stretched from Stranraer and the Rhins in the far west of the region all the way to Dumfries – an equivalent distance of some 75 miles or more – went unobserved.

Working Group⁸⁵, she said that it was obvious the hospital and fire services would not change, and that residents in these two Council Wards would remain part of Dumfries and Galloway Council. However, the Boundary Commission proposals became a vital issue over which political activists fought⁸⁶ and for this reason it became a focus in my own fieldwork. The Boundary Commission proposals absorbed the efforts and attention of a small group of several dozen political activists, mainly drawn from the local Labour and Conservative Parties – both groups of which believed they had much at stake politically. But to reduce this to a story of (political) self-interest is to ignore the fact that there remained a language-game to be ‘played’ – and that one’s arguments were strengthened if one could claim to speak on behalf of the local community.

Equally, to return to Lisa Malkki’s challenge (1999) to address the distance between anthropological and journalistic modes of making knowledge, the material detailed in this chapter clearly demonstrates that anthropologists must be mindful of another alleged ‘distance’: that which exists between journalism and political activism. This thesis is primarily concerned with a predicament paralleled in the work of the anthropologist and would-be political activist: where does one go to identify (locate) ‘relevant’ knowledge? If local newspapers are an important source of such knowledge in Dumfries and Galloway, it would be reasonable to suggest that the knowledge produced by the anthropologist, journalist and political activist is mutually constitutive of the other(s). Furthermore, when local newspapers run petitions and support (political)

⁸⁵ This was the ‘action group’ that had been formed by local people to fight the proposals. It held several meetings to keep their supporters regularly informed about their submission. The last of their meetings was held just days before the public inquiry.

⁸⁶ One Conservative Party activist claimed that during the public inquiry that in his hometown of Annan, he had not met anyone with strong feelings about the proposed changes – other than ‘political activists.’

campaigns, they can themselves become *de-facto political actors/activists*⁸⁷ – perhaps like communities in Das’ (1995) terms. As such, local newspapers provide no more an objective account – or ‘an outside view’ (cf. Riles 2001) of local politics than that which the would-be political activist might otherwise be able to provide – or even the anthropologist, for that matter (cf. Das 1995:18, Malkki 1999:95). If the practices by which anthropologists make knowledge are implicated in those of political activists, journalists and others, we need to recognise that ‘our’ knowledge practices are mutually constitutive of ‘theirs’ – whoever ‘they’ may be – and vice versa; no wonder our crises of knowledge also appear to be crises out there, ‘in the world’ (Riles 2003a:188). Noting that in the struggle described in this chapter some political activists asserted – on behalf of the local community – the right to name certain arguments, predispositions and practices ‘Political’, anthropologists should be even more mindful of the following question: *who names what modes of knowledge anthropological?* If such modes are available to others for their own purposes and can therefore be given another name, *when* are they anthropological, and *why*?

⁸⁷ One journalist for *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* objected to my suggestion that her employer’s campaign against the Boundary Commission’s proposals had been ‘political’ – although she conceded that her newspaper’s campaign ‘had political consequences’.

Chapter Four

Dispelling *Doonhamers*

Naming and the numbers' game

'We are talking about percentages, the mileages between A and B, what percentage of what constituency is going to be in what. We are talking about people – that's what the Boundary Commission should be about and there are exceptions ... where the Boundary Commission can deviate from the quota of 70,000 and these are the reasons being put forward by the Dumfries and Galloway Council.'

John Forteath – the Labour Leader of Dumfries and Galloway Council – at the Boundary Commission public inquiry, 15 November 2002

Because Dumfries and Galloway Council formally objected to the Boundary Commission's proposals – and in response to the lodging of hundreds of objections from local people – the Boundary Commission decided to convene a public inquiry into its proposed changes. This chapter explores evidence presented to that two-day inquiry, which was held in Dumfries on 14-15 November 2002⁸⁸. I argue here that since it was unclear what evidence or criteria the Boundary Commission would use to decide whether or not to heed local opposition to its proposals, political activists framed their arguments in terms with which they were familiar. As a result, the 'evidence' presented to the public inquiry served to highlight the complex and hybrid nature of knowledge and social relations (cf. Edwards 2000).

⁸⁸ The public inquiry in Dumfries was the third and final 'local' inquiry to be convened in southern Scotland, others having been held earlier that month in Hamilton and Peebles. Some political activists from the local area gave evidence at these other inquiries because they were unable to attend the one in Dumfries. However, this chapter focuses solely on evidence presented at the public inquiry held in Dumfries.

In their history of electoral boundaries in the United Kingdom, Rossiter et al (1999)⁸⁹ argue that the so-called 'British compromise' – which seeks to reconcile conflicting requirements for representing 'separate interests' within the electoral system – is very ambiguous:

'It expresses two of the main requirements – equal representation of people and separate representation of communities – in its redistricting rules which ... are ambiguous and unclear with regard to the relative priority of the various criteria. With regard to the third – the representation of party interests – it allows the parties to seek influence over the redistricting procedures, within the context of the other, ambiguous, criteria.' (Rossiter et al 1999:16)

Confronted with such ambiguity, political activists presenting evidence to the inquiry argued from what they knew (cf. Edwards 2000:23), even when it was not always clear where the argument was going, or whether it would make a difference. As a result, I borrow from Jeanette Edwards (2000:31) the idea of treating the material here as 'an ethnographic window' by which 'notions of what constitutes relatedness, which usually remain implicit, can be discerned'⁹⁰.

The inquiry itself was held in the Main Chamber of the Council Offices on English Street, which is the room in which full meetings of Dumfries and Galloway Council were held on a monthly basis. As I entered the room, a Boundary Commission official asked me to sign an attendance sheet and handed me several papers, including a booklet covering the inquiry's rules and procedures (Boundary Commission for Scotland

⁸⁹ Apart from this study – in human geography – electoral boundaries have received scant attention from social scientists – let alone anthropologists – in Britain.

⁹⁰ Edwards (2000:37; cf. 1993:43) argues that New Reproductive Technologies (NRT) provides such a 'window' on ideas and assumptions about kinship. For more on the ethnography of New Reproductive Technologies, see Edwards (1993, 2000), Edwards and Strathern (1999), Franklin (1993, 1997), Franklin and Agone (1998), and Strathern (1991, 1992b, 1992c, 1995a, 1999).

2002a, 2002b). An audience of up to 100 people watched the inquiry at any given moment. Towards the front – and with his back to a wall on which hung large portraits of past Provosts and Council Leaders – sat the Assistant Commissioner, who would preside over the inquiry. Next to him sat a stenographer, whose transcript of the two days would later be posted on the Boundary Commission Website⁹¹. To the Assistant Commissioner's left was a chair from which 'witnesses' would 'give evidence'. Sitting behind tables in front of him were representatives of the local Labour Party as well as the Scottish Conservatives; behind them sat the rest of the audience⁹².

For most of the inquiry, I sat at the back of the room and took detailed notes; the ethnographic material presented here has been reconstructed from those notes as well as the Boundary Commission's transcript of the two days. The inquiry adopted quasi-legal forms; the 'evidence' of 'witnesses' was subjected to 'cross-examination' from other witnesses. On the first day, a majority of the witnesses argued against the Commission's proposals. This was followed by a number of mainly Conservative Party witnesses who spoke in favour of them on the second day. Those representatives from the local Labour Party sitting at the front of the room acted as if they were 'prosecuting' the proposals in a courtroom trial; a local solicitor – Mr D. – presented much of the Labour Party's 'case' and took the lead during the cross-examination of witnesses. In contrast, local Conservatives 'defended' the bulk of the proposals, with an official from Conservative Party Central Office in London – Mr P. – leading from their side.

⁹¹ The Boundary Commission for Scotland Website can be found at www.bcomm-scotland.gov.uk.

⁹² Other Boundary Commission officials observed the proceedings from the back of the room. Mistaking me for a journalist, one began chatting to me about the other local inquiries he had watched. He observed, ironically, that the Labour Party always sat 'on the Right' of the audience, while the Conservatives took their seats 'to the Left.'

I have suggested that the inquiry took on quasi-legal forms because, in some important areas, it did not conform to some of the legal conventions one might expect to see at inquiries, tribunals and commissions (cf. Dominy 2001, Chapter Seven; Wilson 2001). For instance – unlike the experience of Mashpee Indians trying to assert a land claim on Cape Cod (Clifford 1988:277-346) – there was very little discussion about the rules of evidence (cf. Miyazaki 2004). Opponents to the proposals presented copious amounts of information without necessarily establishing their sources, as if the sheer strength of public feeling combined with the weight of words themselves would be enough to persuade the Boundary Commission to abandon its proposals. When ‘evidence’ was disputed, this tended to happen during ‘cross-examination’ and then focused on the applicability, say, of labour force statistics and census data. If much of the evidence appeared sketchy and circumstantial, it sometimes seemed that the emotive rhetoric used – which highlighted the need to put ‘local ties’ between ‘people’ and ‘communities’ before ‘a numbers’ game’ – risked exaggerating the argument. Clearly, something mattered here and it was important to grapple at the very least with the language – if not the substance – of these arguments.

Furthermore, despite the best efforts of the Assistant Commissioner to keep proceedings running smoothly, the formalities of the inquiry were under constant negotiation. When one person was refused permission to cross-examine a witness on the grounds that he was not prepared to ‘give evidence’ himself, he promptly volunteered to ‘come forward as a witness’ and the questioning (re-) commenced. On another occasion, when a witness concluded his testimony with a verse from ‘that wonderful hymn Abide With Me’, a puzzled Assistant Commissioner asked a much-amused audience: ‘Well,

who wishes to follow that?’ Sometimes, witnesses strayed so far from the issues surrounding electoral boundaries that the Assistant Commissioner had to intervene. During cross-examination, Mr. R. accused a Tory Party activist – Mr L. – of supporting the Boundary Commission proposals because he allegedly wanted ‘to stick up this area’ because he had encountered difficulty in forming a local Community Council. Mr L. responded that if a community ‘cannot identify itself, then there is a problem there, surely?’ Angered, Mr R. accused Mr L. of being ‘bloody negative’ and ‘bloody surrendering’, to which the Assistant Commissioner interjected:

‘Language and comments of that nature are not helpful and its not going to help me a lot to know the difficulties involved in getting community councils together.’

Before working through the evidence presented to the inquiry, it is worth recalling from the previous chapter that the new PCA constituency was variously described as ‘a hybrid unit’, ‘leftovers’, a thing ‘of rags and patches’, a ‘faceless, rural conglomeration’ and ‘an incredible area with no identity’. All of these descriptions evoked an idea that the new PCA constituency was composed of disparate parts that did not belong to the whole (cf. Strathern 1992a), although it was not always clear what political activists meant when they described the new Parliamentary seat as a ‘hybrid’. In this chapter, then, I explore this question and argue that what matters most are the ways in which political activists link diverse elements and material rather than the individual elements themselves. In ‘connecting up’, so to speak, these linkages are put to work, ‘ideas trigger other ideas’ (Edwards 1993:46), and claims travel.

Hybrid knowledge

I begin with Edwards' (2000:67) suggestion that – drawing on diverse sources and involving (mixing) what might appear contradictory practices – knowledge itself is a 'hybrid'. Indeed, a bewildering array of statistics and information was cited during the public inquiry to highlight the proximity or distance between different 'communities'. Argument raged over the significance of postcodes; the mileage between towns and villages; analysis of bus timetables and (the lack of) public transport connections; employment information and labour force statistics; census and electoral data; and the importance of local knowledge. There was also lengthy historical analysis of Dumfries and surrounding towns, drawing on the work of – amongst others – popular local historians and the testimony provided in previous Boundary Commission reviews. Furthermore, the existence of the kinds of organisations described in Chapter Two – like the Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP) – were cited by supporters of the proposals as examples of 'links' maintained across Southwest Scotland and other parts of southern Scotland⁹³. Meanwhile, opponents of the proposals also drew on local newspaper coverage like that described in Chapter Three⁹⁴.

The idea that knowledge is a hybrid – a complex interplay of diverse (heterogeneous) elements – is consistent with a view of modern knowledge as being 'infinitely complex' (Riles 2001:18). This view was equally available to political

⁹³ One Tory Party activist – a business consultant – argued: '... [There] are strong linkages between Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Scottish Borders Council; and between Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Enterprise Borders because the two areas believe they have a great deal in common. And therefore I cannot accept the argument that the proposal is to link this area with an alien part of Scotland with which it has nothing in common.'

⁹⁴ Russell Brown MP was the first 'witness' to 'give evidence' to the public inquiry. In his submission, he drew on a number of sources – including editorial and other comment published in

activists as well as the anthropologist. For instance, the former Tory MP for Dumfries Lord Monro observed that Conservative Party submissions had covered ‘employment, history, local festivals, sport, recreation, tourism, agriculture and forestry’ while ‘the interests of the elderly and the young have not been overlooked.’ Linking diverse materials also features strongly in the potted (auto) biographies of political activists as they commenced their ‘evidence’. For instance, Provost Cameron highlighted his long involvement with local Government as well as his ‘pride’ in Dumfries:

‘I am the Provost of Dumfries – a councillor for 36 years and seen many changes – twice Provost and I don’t think that anybody [has done] any more for the people than myself. I go about the communities of Dumfries and our town and round about and I know the views and this has really upset me – the Boundary Commission suggestions of splitting our town of Dumfries – the beautiful town of Dumfries.’

In this way, Provost Cameron empowered his claim to speak of the links between the constituent communities of Dumfries. Meanwhile, a Conservative Party ‘witness’ introduced himself as someone who could detail the ‘strong links’ between Dumfries and rural Galloway:

‘Sir, my name is David S. and I’d like to speak on Galloway’s strong links with Dumfries. I am the Chairman of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Conservative Association. All my life, my home has been Gatehouse of Fleet. I am a member of the local development initiative, a member of the Children’s Panel in Dumfries and Galloway and I am also involved in a number of historical research projects. I would like to make a short statement drawing on my experience of historical research. However, as Association Chairman, I would also like to express my Association’s strong support for the proposals that Peter Duncan has made.’

local newspapers – and spoke in detail about the *Dumfriesshire Newspapers*’ ‘Keep Our Identity’ campaign.

Here, David S. draws on his 'experience of historical research' as well as his position as a spokesman for the local Conservative Party Association. A Labour Party activist from Annan placed emphasis on his involvement with several 'non-political organisations', including a number of groups dedicated to local history:

'My name is John C. and I have lived in ... Annan for the past five years. I am an active member of the Royal Burgh of Annan Community Council and a member of the following non-political organisations: Annan Initiative for the regeneration of Annan Town; the Solway Heritage Society; the Heritage Society; the Solway Burns Club and I am also an active member of the local Church of Scotland Parish Church.'

These introductions foreground a sense of being connected and belonging to a wider community (cf. Cohen 1982, Lovell 1998). As a result, the three political activists described here could argue that they spoke for a larger network of (local) opinion. Some witnesses also claimed to possess knowledge of their local communities through other forms with which scholars of political activism (e.g. Dahl 2004, Paley 2001, Riles 2001) would be familiar. For instance, one Labour Party activist from Lockerbie arrived armed with a petition signed by 122 people before highlighting other, diverse connections with his community:

'My name is Ted B. and I am a member of Lockerbie and District Community Council, Lockerbie and District Business Development Association and of the recently-formed Lockerbie Initiative. My family and I have lived in the town of Lockerbie for more than 13 years. My wife and I have worked in Dumfries for most of that time and my daughters have attended both Lockerbie Primary School and Lockerbie Academy. Prior to University my eldest daughter attended Dumfries College and my wife has studied at the Crichton University in Dumfries. In the past, my youngest daughter won the Dumfriesshire Regional Burns Competition and went on to represent Dumfriesshire ... at the Scottish National Burns Competition.'

However, while political activists drew on diverse biographical details in their testimony, many spoke on the basis of possessing professional ‘expertise’. One example was a Conservative Party activist who lived just outside of Dumfries but who worked as ‘a business consultant’ with Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway. Another Labour Party activist described himself as follows:

‘My name is Robin W. and I live in the town of Dumfries. I am in practice as a Chartered Accountant in a local firm. I have also had experience as a Member of the Nithsdale District [Council] ... and I subsequently was elected to the Unitary Council of Dumfries and Galloway Council to represent Greyfriars Ward, which covers the Town Centre area. I have also served six years [with] Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway ... until last March and presently am Secretary of Loreburn Community Council and [have] recently been appointed Chairman of the Dumfries Town Centre Partnership.’

As a Chartered Accountant linked to a variety of local business and other groups, Robin W. asserted a level of professional expertise that allowed him to use and interpret ‘recent’ employment data to discredit local Conservative Party claims that most of the local workforce was engaged in agriculture and other primary industries (see below)⁹⁵. Immersing one in – or making links with – Community Councils and other local democratic forms led to a competition of what Verdery (1993) might call ‘the politics of representative-ness’ between political activists eager to persuade the Assistant Commissioner of the efficacy of local knowledge in general, and that to which they could

⁹⁵ According to this data, 9% of the local workforce was engaged in agriculture, compared to a Scottish average of 2%. 24% were employed in manufacturing and industry, while 32% worked in the public sector. Robin W. accused the Boundary Commission of creating a new constituency – PCA – that would become ‘a low-paid, rural ghetto’. Roger P. – the Conservative Party official who cross-examined Robin W. – disputed his figures on the basis that they could be broken down

individually speak in particular. Perhaps with a hint of cynicism, one Conservative Party activist described himself as ‘Chairman for the second time of Langholm, Ewes and Westerkirk Community Council; a Board Member of the Langholm Community Initiative; a Board Member of the Eskdale Foundation; etc. etc. etc...’

Other witnesses, however, did not speak as professional ‘experts’. Rather, being ‘born and bred’ (Edwards 2000) in the area allowed them to speak with authority about the local community. For instance, one Tory Councillor introduced himself as someone who had been ‘born and brought up’ in Dumfriesshire and who continued to ‘live and farm’ in the area. Another Conservative Party activist described himself as ‘born and bred’ and nearby Annan. As the Lord Lieutenant of Dumfries explained when he gave evidence:

‘I have been in Dumfriesshire – I have lived in Dumfriesshire for over 70 years and my family before me a long time longer. So I know this county fairly well I think.’

Following Edwards (2000), I suggest that these potted introductions demonstrate that political activists made claims to be ‘experts’ based on two, alternative kinds of experience: that gained through living in the local area as well as that derived from reading and study, typified here by those individuals who were able to establish specific forms of professional expertise⁹⁶. However:

to the local Authority area (i.e. Dumfries and Galloway) but not to the level of a Parliamentary constituency.

⁹⁶ Indeed, Conservative Party activists later explained to me that two sets of practices – ‘getting involved’ with the community as well as reading (studying) local newspapers – were vital to

‘Rather than seeing these as alternative forms of acquiring knowledge (as different epistemologies), it is more useful ... to see them as aspects of each other. A notion that knowledge is acquired through study requires a counterpoint, in this case, that one can know through experience (and vice versa).’ (Edwards 2000:65)

As a result, ‘knowing shifts between these two possibilities,’ which ‘are each implicated in the other’ (Edwards 2000:67). The point is that one form of knowledge is ‘screened out’ at the moment the other is brought into view but that the two forms necessarily rely on – and sustain – each other. However, time spent and experience gained through living in a community as well as studying it is not in itself adequate. Respect and affection for the local community is also vital (Edwards 2000:65-66). But if knowledge is a hybrid derived from two alternative – albeit mutually constitutive – epistemologies, does it tell the anthropologist anything about the kind of hybrid political activists thought the proposed, new PCA constituency represented? I return to this question shortly.

Dispelling *Doonhamers*

Vital to many witnesses asserting ‘born and bred’ status was being able to claim a name (Edwards 2000). Arguments over names and naming featured strongly at the public inquiry⁹⁷, as they have more generally in political anthropology (e.g. Hansen 2001, Kertzer 1996)⁹⁸. I focus here on one particular name – *Doonhamer* – which one resident of Dumfries – Alan R. – defined for the benefit of the Assistant Commissioner:

‘getting to know’ the issues that mattered most in the local area. These practices were often described as if they were inter-related and inseparable.

⁹⁷ For example, a Conservative MSP who was born in rural Galloway presented evidence on the second day of the inquiry, saying: ‘yesterday ... you heard from a Doonhamer and a Teerie. I sit here unashamedly as a Gallovidian.’

⁹⁸ It is not possible to fully survey the anthropological scholarship that exists on names and naming. Importantly for my argument, Edwards (1993:57) observes that names ‘locate a person in a nexus of kin’; they have therefore been crucial to studies of kinship (Edwards 1993, 2000;

‘A Doonhamer is a person born and bred in Dumfries and really has lived there all their life. If you want to know the history behind it ... I am led to believe it comes from when people who used to stay up in the Strathclyde area but traditionally came from Dumfries during the war time and they would always say at the end of the week after working in the factories, ‘I’m going *doon hame*’. So the people from the Glasgow area started calling them the Doonhamers, and I believe that’s the history behind it.’

Arguing against the Boundary Commission’s proposals, Alan R. declared:

‘[First] and foremost I am a Doonhamer. Now that, maybe, doesn’t mean a lot to the people across the way here [referring to Conservative activists sitting in the audience] but to me that means a Hell of a lot. I have lived in Dumfries all of my life and an integral part of the community and I want to remain part of that community. ... What I would also like to say, sir; as it says, it’s Nithsdale East – that’s the name of the [Ward] – the Nith – that is the river running right through the heart of Dumfries – Nithsdale. I want to remain part of Dumfries. The Provost earlier spoke about the history, the Royal Burgh – 800 years plus! I live in that Burgh – the heart of that Burgh. It isn’t by chance that my postcode is DG1 – that means I live in the centre of Dumfries.’

Alan R. marshals (links) diverse elements to demonstrate the relationship between a name (*Doonhamer*) and the object named (Dumfries). These include a Council Ward named after a River – which runs ‘right through the heart of Dumfries’ – 800 years of history, and a postcode. These disparate elements are brought together to give some definition – a sense of place – to Dumfries. By invoking the Provost’s testimony – delivered to the public inquiry earlier that day – Alan R. was able to draw on more elements, each of which perhaps lacked significance on their own but through being brought (tied) together were able to amplify one another (cf. Gray 1999, 2000) so that the overall claim became

Edwards and Strathern 1999; Strathern 1981, 1992b, 1992c) as well as gender (e.g. Watson 1986). Interestingly, the Scottish Tories have periodically been consumed by arguments over the name of their Party during the twentieth century (cf. Hutchison 2001; Seawright 1996, 1999).

more than the sum of its parts. Furthermore, these elements were connected ‘without making assumptions about level and hierarchy’ (Strathern 1996:552) so that, in addition to the town’s literary history⁹⁹, the Provost makes mention of schools, churches and war memorials; draws on questions of geography and demographic spread; and even invokes the DG1 postcode to make a claim to ‘our stamp’. He also notes *Guid Nychburries*, a local festival held in Dumfries annually, in which the Provost plays a central role¹⁰⁰. Connecting some of these elements – even if only partially (Strathern 1991) – might seem ‘absurd’ or, perhaps, ‘surreal’ (cf. Franklin 2001) but all of them (and more) made sense to local opponents of the proposals who expressed pride in ‘oor toon’.

I suggest that naming functions to locate (differentiate) a town and its people in both time and space, by bringing together a range of kin-based and associative connections. The role naming plays in making persons seems relevant here:

‘Naming acts, on the one hand, to differentiate – it gives voice to variability – while on the other, it aggregates – making the connections between people conspicuous. ... Above all, they attach persons to specific others ... It is those attachments that also give persons their unique characteristics.’ (Edwards 1993:58)

Naming serves to foreground certain kinds of associations while screening others out. For instance, making a claim to a name enables political activists to assert a

⁹⁹ The two most famous writers to have resided in the town were the Scottish poet Robert Burns – who is buried in Dumfries – and the author of *Peter Pan*, J M Barrie (cf. Fortune and McMillan 2005).

¹⁰⁰ I do not consider *Guid Nychburries* in any detail in this thesis but it is worthy of ethnographic attention itself. The festival culminates in the Riding of the Marches, an annual ritual concerned with marking the boundaries between Town and Country (Williams 1975, Wright 1985) that can be traced back several hundred years (cf. Neville 1998). Similar rituals include the Beating of the Bounds in Kent (Darian-Smith 1999, 2002) and the Common Ridings in the Scottish Borders (Neville 1979, 1987).

‘proprietary identity ... over a large range of animate, inanimate, and quasi-animate entities’, including ‘one’s own past, the place where one lives, inheritance, family names and so forth’ (Edwards and Strathern 1999:149). In this way, naming is closely allied to a concept of ‘belonging’, which ‘has such an embracing (inclusive) effect’:

‘... That it can encompass any form of association, including narrational or logical association, as in stories or classificatory systems, and appropriations which draw any manner of human or non-human elements towards one: ‘my colleague’, ‘my illness’, ‘my house’, ‘my cat’, ‘my way’. In turn, entities traced, assembled, classed together, or juxtaposed ... ‘belong’ to one another thereby, although the links through which they are brought into association may be diverse.’ (Edwards & Strathern 1999:150)

To this list might be added another ‘element’ that a name can appropriate: ‘my’ or ‘our MP’. Arguments over the disparate communities of PCA were often framed in terms of how difficult it would be for local people in one part of the constituency to access their Member of Parliament if he or she decided to base him or herself in another, distant (‘alien’) part. As the Labour Party activist Ted B. from Lockerbie put it:

‘In any democracy, it is important that the electorate are properly represented and if they are to wholeheartedly embrace and use their democratic rights, it is important that they identify with the people who they are being asked to elect. In an area as diverse and as geographically spread as the Commission’s proposed constituency, it is inevitable that at least one of the different communities would have a Member of Parliament who they will have little in common with and who will have a limited knowledge of their locality. If this proposal is not overturned then the resultant socially irrelevant constituency will only serve to contribute to voter apathy and to a further disillusionment by the electorate of our-hard-fought for parliamentary democracy.’

Under cross-examination from the local Conservative Party, Ted B. argued that the issue was one of identity ‘and of identifying with the electoral system’. From this perspective,

what matters is whether local residents viewed the Labour MP for Dumfries Russell Brown as ‘our MP’ – a man who would always ‘put Dumfries first’. What seemed most relevant to Ted B. was that people living in Lockerbie ‘would find it difficult to travel to Peebles’ and ‘have no connection’ with the town, which is located in the Scottish Borders near Edinburgh but would become part of the new Parliamentary constituency. As a result, local people would not identify with (claim) an MP based in the Scottish Borders. Mr P. from the Conservative Party confronted him on this question of ‘distance’:

MR P.:	Why would anyone from Lockerbie travel to Peebles?
TED B.:	That’s a very good question.
MR P.:	They wouldn’t have to, would they, apart from the Member of Parliament?
TED B.:	You are suggesting that the people of Lockerbie wouldn’t have to travel to Peebles. I haven’t suggested that they would, but I think what you are doing is reinforcing the point that there is no cultural, historical link or no common ties between Lockerbie and Peebles, whereas I think [an] enormous amount of evidence suggests that the people of Lockerbie have a lot of cultural and historical ties with Dumfries, which they regard as their county town.

So Mr P. conceded that there were no ‘links’ that would draw residents of Lockerbie to Peebles in contrast to Dumfries, which they could claim as ‘their county town’. But it could also be said that the absence of such links meant that it was not necessary for them to be asserted in the first place; only a Member of Parliament would have to contrive to make them. In an inversion of my earlier contention that local people might make a claim to ‘our MP’, this would require an MP to make a proprietorial claim to the new seat: ‘my constituency’.

Local Labour Party activists tended to evoke ‘distance’ between and communities in Dumfriesshire Peebles in the Scottish Borders by selecting fairly extreme – and potentially unlikely – combinations of local bus connections. A hypothetical bus ‘user’ – sometimes personified as a pensioner – would make these connections in order to visit (claim) ‘his’ or ‘her’ MP, who could base themselves ‘anywhere’ in the new constituency. For instance, the local Labour Councillor Tom McAughtrie painted a somewhat absurd picture of the poor transport routes in southern Scotland:

‘To go by bus from Peebles to Kirkconnel [in Upper Nithsdale] takes four and a half hours and requires five different buses. Bus number 1 goes from Peebles to Edinburgh, bus number 2 goes from Edinburgh to Glasgow, bus number 3 goes from Glasgow to Lanark, bus number 4 goes from Lanark to Sanquhar and bus number 5 goes from Sanquhar to Kirkconnel. You are virtually doing a tour of Scotland to get over the hills, which in good weather in a car can take you under an hour’

This rendering became even more surreal under cross-examination:

MR P.: ... You mentioned going by bus from Kirkconnel to Peebles. I won’t go through how difficult buses are in either [of these] constituencies, but why would anyone want to go on a bus to Kirkconnel from Peebles?

CLLR McAUGHTRIE: Well, I think the reason you have asked that is one of the reasons why we are opposing this constituency. There are no links of a social nature – and the geographic links – and if its going to take four and a half hours to go by bus – and bearing in mind an MP doesn’t have to have a motor car. An MP can just decide to base himself in any part of the constituency, and it may well be if he decides to have meetings in Kirkconnel and somebody from Peebles wants to go and see him then that is the only way he’s going to get there. But I think you have answered your own question.

MR P.: In the new constituency, I wonder if you can tell me by – in terms of journey time – where would be the furthest from

- Kirkcubbin? What would be the most difficult journey in terms of a journey time by road?
- CLLR McAUGHTRIE: By road? Well, having looked at all the bus timetables, I would think Kirkcubbin/Peebles is the longest journey you can take.
- MR P.: Well, would you accept from me that actually the longest journey in the new constituency – the longest journey time in the new constituency – is actually both within – points within [Dumfriesshire] because it's actually Kirkcubbin to Langholm?
- CLLR McAUGHTRIE: I would dispute that. It depends which bus you catch. You can catch a bus from Kirkcubbin down to Dumfries – which takes approximately one hour – you wait half an hour and catch a bus to Langholm. It depends which bus timetable you look at, but I can assure you the longest journey is Peebles to Kirkcubbin.
- MR P.: Well, I'm talking about road. I don't know why you believe anyone would want to go by bus? Who would want to take a bus journey?
- CLLR McAUGHTRIE: Well, it's the very point I'm making. There are no ties between these areas, so why link them up for the purposes of a parliamentary constituency?

Local Conservatives countered that with over 60% of the electors in the new PCA constituency coming from Dumfriesshire, the local MP would probably choose to be based somewhere in the old Dumfries constituency – perhaps even on the outskirts of Dumfries itself, in Heathhall or Lochbarbriggs. They also argued that constituents without access to a car would not have to take the bus to meet an MP because in a constituency like PCA, the Member of Parliament would come to visit them. As a result, the MP would become a link between disparate communities for which 'local ties' were otherwise absent.

The only outcome that was certain should the Boundary Commission's proposals be implemented was that from the 2005 General Election onwards, no one would ever be able to represent (claim) the Dumfries constituency again because it would have ceased to

exist. It seemed very unlikely, for instance, that Alan R.'s postcode would change as a result of the proposals. Meanwhile, Conservative Party activists argued that the Boundary Commission changes would not 'tear the heart out of Dumfries' and that residents from Northeast Dumfries would still be able to call themselves '*Doonhamers*'. Following Alan R.'s testimony, Mr P. from the Conservative Party said:

'I'm sure whatever parliamentary constituency [in which you end up living] you will always be a proud *Doonhamer*.'

This condescending remark provoked an angry murmur from many in the audience, but other Tory Party activists were not deterred. Citing the experience of the Scottish Conservatives at the 1997 General Election (see Chapter Five), the Conservative MSP David Mundell stated:

'... I know many Conservatives thought that if they woke up on the ... the 1st of May 1997 and Hector Monro wasn't their MP that the world would stop. But in fact it didn't; it just carried on. So it [the Boundary Commission proposals] is not the earth shattering change. People will still be Doonhamers – will still all come together, I'm sure – in the way that we do to fight for Dumfries and to campaign for the area.'

These points may have resonated with the Assistant Commissioner; they certainly echoed with some of my own personal scepticism about the occasionally melodramatic claims made in defence of the status quo. This is not to deny the strength of feeling locally about the proposed changes, which according to Dr Elaine Murray MSP was unlike anything she had ever encountered after years of 'political campaigning ... for the Scottish Parliament in the 1990s, collecting money for striking miners in the 1980s'. As I

have already stated, in a public inquiry where it was unclear how the Boundary Commission might be persuaded to abandon its proposals for Dumfries and Galloway, political activists argued from what they knew.

A good mix

Opponents of the Boundary Commission's proposals placed considerable emphasis on the fact that for much of the twentieth century, a variety of local agencies and institutions have shared the same administrative boundaries as those of Dumfries and Galloway Council. These boundaries were described as 'coterminous', which served to render them natural¹⁰¹. The Labour Leader of Dumfries and Galloway Council John Forteath argued that local people would find the new PCA constituency 'inconvenient' and 'confusing' because it cut across three Local Authority boundaries: Dumfries and Galloway, the Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire. That the proposed Dumfries and Galloway constituency would not share the same boundaries of Dumfries and Galloway Council would only add to the confusion:

'Dumfries and Galloway is a nationally and internationally recognised Council area and the proposed constituency which bears the same name, not only excludes the entire area of Annandale and Eskdale but also the communities of

¹⁰¹ Of course, some boundaries seemed more natural than others. No one, for instance, seriously suggested transgressing the English Border. Obviously, this Border delimited the jurisdiction of the Boundary Commission for Scotland, but this observation seems relevant given that the application of the electoral quota for English constituencies to Scotland for the first time meant that Parliamentary seats could theoretically become uniform in size both North and South of the Border. However, any suggestion to link parts of Dumfriesshire with, say, Carlisle struck most political activists as ridiculous. This did not stop David Mundell MSP suggesting that 'there are very strong ties between Carlisle and Annan but nobody seems to think – the rules would not allow it to be linked with Carlisle – and probably if it had been there would have been very few objections.'

Locharbriggs and Heathhall which have become recognised as part of the town of Dumfries.'

In explaining the importance of coterminous boundaries, Councillor Forteath further highlighted the relationships forged between the region's administrative and bureaucratic organisations:

'The contiguous boundary of the Dumfries and Galloway Council area covers, not only the Local Authority area but also the Police authority area, the Fire authority area, the Health Board authority, the Local Enterprise area and the Tourist Board. In addition, the Crown Office has recently re-organised the Procurator Fiscal service and has now established a regional Procurator Fiscal service, which covers the Dumfries and Galloway Council area. The region's community planning partnership covers the whole of the existing region and has made significant progress since its inception in February 1999. A recent independent review of community planning activities identified the shared boundary as a key factor in the success achieved to date, which is recognised and supported by the Scottish Executive and others. In addition, a number of joint projects have been put in place to develop and promote Dumfries and Galloway as a unified area, which includes the natural place marketing initiative and operational developments in relation to ... joint future health and social services within Dumfries and Galloway Council area and the region's response to the Foot and Mouth crisis make the shared boundary an important factor in determining the success during last year.'

What is interesting about this rendering of Dumfries and Galloway as 'a unified area' is that it should exist, first and foremost, as an administrative space inhabited by bureaucratic organisations. I suggest that this chimes with notions of Dumfries and Galloway being the Forgotten Region because it does not evoke much of a sense that the area is somehow 'distinctive'. However, political activists argued that other 'ties' existed that bound communities together within the region. For instance, I have already noted that one Labour Party activist suggested residents of Lockerbie could make a claim to Dumfries as their county town; Ted B. explained:

‘Lockerbie is only some 13 miles from Dumfries and can be regarded as a dormitory town for Dumfries. Many Lockerbie residents work in Dumfries and either use the very regular bus service between the towns or commute the short distance by car. ...I can categorically state that many people in Lockerbie are wholeheartedly against the Boundary Commission proposals and have absolutely no desire to be split away from Dumfries, or any wish to be forced into an alien and irrelevant connection with parts of Lanarkshire and the Scottish Borders.’

The Labour MP Russell Brown agreed:

‘Thousands of people, every day, travel to Dumfries from Annandale and Eskdale for work, social pursuits or education, and they have as much of a stake in the town’s development as residents who actually live in Dumfries. The links between Annandale and Eskdale – and Dumfries – are so profound that it would be impossible for an MP for Dumfries constituency to put one area ahead of the other because each relies so much on the other...’

From this perspective, the component parts of Dumfriesshire are thought to belong to the whole; those living in communities throughout Dumfriesshire are just as entitled to make a claim to Dumfries as *Doonhamers* themselves. Indeed, while everyone has a stake in the development of Dumfries, no area can be made a priority over another as all of Dumfriesshire’s ‘parts’ could be said to be mutually constitutive of each other – as well as the whole. At the same time, a relationship is implied here between Town and Country (William 1975, Wright 1985). As Dr Elaine Murray put it:

‘There are no historic community ties which link all the disparate towns and villages in the proposed Peebles, Clydesdale and Annandale seat. Yet it would be formed by breaking the historic link between rural Dumfriesshire and its county town of Dumfries. Dumfriesshire was forged over many centuries of common history and shared experience; it was not drawn on a map by bureaucrats.’

At stake, then, were the ‘ties’ that bound ‘fellow Doonhamers’ together as well as the ‘common history and shared experience’ that linked the communities of ‘rural Dumfriesshire’ with its country town. Two heterogeneous elements – the Urban and the Rural – are linked here and, according to Russell Brown MP, to break this connection is to flirt with (economic) catastrophe:

‘As a resident of Annandale and Eskdale, I reject completely any suggestion that the rural nature of some parts of the district makes it more appropriate to be lumped in with some communities in completely different regions simply because they too include some rural areas. My concern is such that I would seriously urge those who are proposing a large rural constituency to think long and hard at what they are proposing. Such a move could have a serious economic impact, if it was proposed to centre a large percentage of the economic activity solely around [sic] agriculture.’

Either curious or sceptical that new Parliamentary boundaries could have ‘a serious economic impact’ on local communities, the Assistant Commissioner asked Russell Brown MP to clarify this point, which he did:

‘I believe it works well here in Dumfries constituency, where we do have a fair amount of agriculture and we also have [a] manufacturing sector, and tourism. There is a good mix there. ... I think it is good to have a mix and diversification of industrial sectors operating.’

This talk of mixing urban and rural industries and interests – of linking heterogeneous elements together within the same constituency – can be viewed as a version of another kind of hybrid in which Town and Country have been substituted for, say, Human and the Non-Human elements (cf. Latour 1987, 1993, 1996) or Nature and Culture/Nurture (Edwards 2000). Indeed, what a lot of Conservative Party activists found attractive about

PCA was its allegedly 'rural' characteristics. One (non-Tory) supporter of the Boundary Commission's proposals who lived near Langholm – Diane S. – said:

'At the moment, Dumfries constituency to me is Dumfries town dominated and it means we have an urban MP who naturally has to concentrate on [the] majority of his electors. Agriculture and tourism and its allied industries must be freed from the ever changing of goalposts... I know our local MP is accessible; it is just that I believe that there are horses for courses and what I need is a rural MP...'

A Conservative Councillor – Ivor Hyslop – put it this way:

'The idea of a rural constituency to allow rural voices to be heard cannot be seen as an unreasonable proposal. The current Dumfries constituency – because of Dumfries town – has a predominantly urban agenda and any proposal that would allow rural issues to be highlighted by their MP would be of great advantage for the area. To demonstrate my point last year, when there was Foot and Mouth recovery money available ... the area most affected – rural Lower Nithsdale – received very little, whilst urban Dumfries received almost all of the regeneration budget, owing to a greater number of councillors.'

Donald B. from Moffat suggested that, in separating Dumfries from the many smaller towns of Dumfriesshire, there would be 'no dominant community in the new constituency', which would have benefits for rural communities:

'Towns like Moffat often feel ignored in the political decision-making and I think that the fact that the proposed new constituency has no large community in it means that our MP will have to pay more regard to the communities like Moffat.'

One irony of rendering the Dumfries constituency 'a good mix' of urban and rural elements – in which the Town dominates – is that it perhaps more plausibly resembles 'a hybrid unit' than the new PCA constituency, which the Boundary Commission has

inadvertently distilled of its heterogeneous elements and is essentially 'rural'. Bruno Latour (1993:10-11) has described 'two sets of practices' – one of translation and one of purification – that work together in tandem to produce, in the case of translation, 'mixtures' between different 'types of beings' or, as a result of purification, two 'distinct ontological zones'¹⁰². These practices are entangled with one another; the denial of the former by the latter '*allows the expanded proliferation of the hybrids whose existence, whose very possibility, it denies*' (Latour 1993:34, original emphasis)¹⁰³. I suggest that these two sets of contradictory-yet-related practices provide a useful means of thinking about the ways in which rival political activists argued over varied combinations or distillations of urban and rural elements during this public inquiry.

Of course, local Labour Party activists challenged their opponents to explain how certain 'elements' made PCA a 'rural' constituency. Under cross-examination, Diane S. had some difficulty identifying whether the textile industry in the small town of Langholm was an 'urban' or 'rural' element despite insisting it could be found in 'sparsely populated rural areas'. Meanwhile, Mr D. from the Labour Party quizzed Councillor Hyslop until he conceded that the issue on which the Dumfries MP Russell Brown – whom he accused of promoting 'an urban agenda' – had most spoken in the House of Commons was agriculture; Mr D. argued that this demonstrated 'rural voices ... are being heard'. Another Labour Party activist continued to cross-examine Councillor H.:

¹⁰² According to Latour (1993:143), this is a condition of 'the modern critical stance' – which demands 'an immediate world, emptied of its mediators'.

MR C.: Right ... we heard earlier only 9% of the people actually work in rural pursuits. So would the people of that constituency be best served with an MP looking after 9% of people that live in it or the 91% of people who are not involved in the rural pursuits? The biggest majority of voters live in places like Annan, Lockerbie, Heathhall, Biggar, who are not involved in rural pursuits. But you still think an MP looking after the rural pursuits would be best to serve that area?

CILLR HYSLOP: I think what we said was 9% worked in agriculture, not rural pursuits. The rural pursuits are tourism, forestry and the textile industry is also based on the – you know – they need wool and stuff in agriculture. So I think there is more than just 9% there – of the population – obviously working [in] rural activities.

Finally, Donald B. – who had argued that small, rural communities like Moffat felt ignored by their Member of Parliament – was subjected to the following interrogation:

MR D.: Mr B., did Lord Monro – formerly Sir Hector Monro, MP for Dumfries from 1964 to 1997 – did he ignore Moffat?

MR B.: Did he ignore Moffat?

MR D.: Yes?

MR B.: No, and I don't believe that Mr Brown does either.

MR D.: But you said Moffat often feels ignored, who was ignoring it?

MR B.: Well, it's difficult to give you examples and perhaps that is too strong a criticism.

MR D.: So can we take it Moffat doesn't feel ignored?

MR B.: Well, it does, I think, in many ways. We – our roads are in a terrible condition and various other activities that go on there – we would like to see rectified.

MR D.: What I would like to know, Mr Burns, is who ignored it? Because you said Moffat often feels ignored and that is the basis of your argument as to why it should go into [a] much more rural constituency. So if Mr Brown didn't ignore it, Sir Hector Monro didn't ignore it, who did? Was it Niall McPherson?

MR B.: Sorry?

¹⁰³ Of course, 'the very concept of the hybrid lends itself to endless narratives of (about, containing) mixture' (Strathern 1996:522) and can conjoin 'entities' of any kind: 'science, technology, texts, and the contents of activities' (Latour 1993:5-6).

MR D.: Was it Niall McPherson – who was a previous MP – who –
 MR B.: Well, I don't go back as far as that.
 MR D.: Can I take [it] that MPs do not – neither the current MP
 [nor] previous MP – [have not] ignored Moffat?
 MR B.: No, I think its fair to say that the MPs don't, no.

There is a fascinating contradiction here. On the one hand, the Dumfries constituency is 'a good mix' of urban and rural elements in which the main county town (Dumfries) dominates the smaller communities of the county (Dumfriesshire); these elements are linked in an unequal yet mutually constitutive relationship. On the other hand, the proposed, new PCA constituency is 'a hybrid unit' even though it is predominantly rural, mostly distilled of its urban elements. It is a hybrid not because it links heterogeneous elements; rather, it is composed of homogenous (rural) 'leftovers' that allegedly cannot be connected even in the most obvious of senses – such as driving from one place to another. Urban and rural elements may be opposed but they nevertheless mediate each other.

The numbers game

During the second day of the public inquiry, the Conservative MSP David Mundell succinctly summed up the conundrum facing defenders of the status quo: could the Boundary Commission justify retaining two Parliamentary constituencies in Southwest Scotland if it meant deviating from its electoral quota by as much as 15,000? He said:

'You have to make the argument to the Commission, which is independent – it isn't influenced by the local press here – it isn't influenced by emotional consideration. You have to make the argument that Galloway and Upper Nithsdale [constituency] can retain 54,000 people. I agree, Dumfries is a sustainable constituency at 63,000 – no question about that – but you have to be

able to make the argument that Galloway and Upper Nithsdale can be sustained at 54,000.'

If the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale constituency was too small for the Boundary Commission to retain, then where must it go to make up the numbers? The local Conservative MP Peter Duncan offered an answer, based on his view that communities in Dumfries and Galloway looked 'progressively eastwards' for work, leisure and services so that 'residents of Kirkcudbright would shop in Dumfries in the same way as residents of Annan would often do the same in Carlisle'. Importantly, looking towards – or linking – towns and villages in such a direction meant that communities in Galloway could make an equal – perhaps stronger – claim to Dumfries as those to its East in Dumfriesshire. The Chairman of the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Conservatives – David S. – added:

'Anecdotal evidence indicates that communities to the west and north west of Dumfries have long looked to the town for work, leisure and shopping while from a distance east of the town there has been less focus on Dumfries... And this is certainly confirmed by an examination of historical transport links. I'm not going to take you back 800 years, but Dumfries almanacs for the end of the 19th century showed that there were regular carriers and omnibus services from as far west as Castle Douglas to Dumfries, but there were no such links from further east than Lochmaben. To this day, the bus axes as we have heard again and again are based on the Stranraer to Dumfries corridor and the Dumfries to Carlisle corridor.'

However, the historical 'evidence' was not based on transport links alone:

'Writing in 1986, the well-known [local] historian Innes McLeod wrote, 'As far west as Gatehouse of Fleet and east to Ruthwell, Dumfries is the regional centre for major shopping and business purposes.' To bring us right up to date the Annan Community survey of 1998 states with regard to leisure activities, 'The cinema is visited by 61% of those questioned with almost a quarter going at least once a month. Most (56%) travel to Carlisle and just 17% to Dumfries.' ... As Dumfries has expanded, it has extended administratively into Galloway. In 1929

the Burghs of Maxwelltown to the west of the Nith, and Dumfries to the east, became one town. Successive editions of the ordnance survey maps show the process continuing, as when the large Lochside housing area became part of Dumfries. Thus, briefly, there are strong links from Galloway into Dumfries and from Dumfries out into Galloway, giving historical support to the Boundary Commission proposals.'

It is not just that rural Dumfriesshire can claim Dumfries as its main county town; as the administrative center for the entire region, Dumfries was also *ensnared* by potentially stronger 'ties' to rural Galloway. Furthermore, the idea that places can be linked as they look 'progressively eastwards' evokes a sense of movement (but not necessarily momentum). When political activists made connections between different places, they then spoke about them *as if the places themselves moved*. This metaphor was especially seductive for the proposals' opponents, as the following exchange between Labour Councillor Forteath and Ian L. from the Conservative Party suggests:

CLR FORTEATH:	Mr L., you realise by – do you agree and realise – by taking this Ward out of Dumfries that you are moving Dumfries hospital, Dumfries maternity home, the Crichton campus, and Dumfries Castle into Peeblesshire?
MR L.:	And Caerlaverock Castle as well – it all goes into the Westminster constituency – it doesn't physically move.
CLR FORTEATH:	Do you also realise that the split up St Michaels Street – looking south – looking towards Glencaple – that this proposal takes the properties on the right hand side of St Michaels Street – the old folks home, the Ship Inn (God forbid) and the area down to the Dock Park – that area jumps over the other side of the street into Peebles?
MR L.:	Yes.
CLR FORTEATH:	And then the houses on the other side of St Michaels Street go into the Dumfries and Galloway [constituency]. It seems completely illogical?

Many found it difficult to resist the idea that once the connections have been made, claims extend their reach to (other) places, which then ‘move’, ‘jump’ or ‘go into’ different constituencies. Some political activists may have found this talk unsettling. When one starts to play the numbers’ game – or, as one starts to connect disparate parts to form whole, new Parliamentary constituencies – some towns risk being ‘pulled’ in all sorts of different directions. Entangled with other communities in distant places, some no longer resemble ‘Dumfries and Galloway looking towns’, as Peter Duncan MP said of those in Upper Nithsdale:

‘It is the case that these two Wards do differ from those further down the Nith Valley in that their heritage is very much linked to the coal mining industry and as a result retain many of their historic links with the other coalfield communities of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. The local residents will certainly consider a shopping or leisure trip to Ayr, Kilmarnock or Lanark before they consider the journey to Dumfries. The local junior football team play in the Ayrshire league and many of the younger people in Sanquhar and Kirkconnel will attend college in Cumnock and Kilmarnock rather than in Dumfries... I know from a recent constituency visit that the local charity bus project in Upper Nithsdale known as the Upper Nithsdale Wheels Appeal, receives many of its bookings from Lanarkshire communities. There is a genuine crossover here...’

It has been suggested that people ‘take pleasure in making links of logic or narrative’ and that linkages can ‘appear exciting, especially when they cross apparent boundaries’ (Strathern and Edwards 1999:152). However, if ‘ideas trigger other ideas’ (Edwards 1993:46), then once connections have made, others threaten to proliferate so quickly that the claims of individual communities to ‘special status’ risk becoming diluted as they travel everywhere – and nowhere – at once. Ironically – and despite arguing that nothing would change if the Boundary Commission’s proposals were implemented – those who became advocates of ‘change’ at the public inquiry were local Tories, who had been

staunch opponents of constitutional change prior to the 1997 General Election and remained strongly associated with traditional, rural-based interests in Dumfriesshire (see Chapter Five). Primarily motivated out of electoral self-interest, the local Conservative Party championed a view that the world had changed, that change was inevitable, and that in a changing world people learned to live by making 'new' kinds of connections.

For opponents of the Boundary Commission's proposals, however, the connections local Conservative Party activists made generated a sense of despair that in some cases bordered on disgust. As if conceding defeat during the public inquiry itself, Dr Elaine Murray MSP suggested that the Boundary Commission might have been persuaded to retain the Dumfries constituency if 'everybody had sung from the same hymn sheet'. For some, that local Tories had 'broken ranks' was analogous to an act of treachery. During the cross-examination of Conservative MSP David Mundell, one resident of Dumfries exclaimed:

'... I would say to you, Sir, do you feel guilty? Because, you are guilty – why, guilty by association! You did not point [that] out at that meeting, Sir, so don't sling it at other people! You are guilty in law by association!'

As baffling as this outburst seemed, it nevertheless pointed to the ways in which Tory Party activists were themselves entangled in various local associations. Indeed, those opposed to the Boundary Commission's proposals could even make a claim over Conservative Party activists (and vice versa), many of which were connected with their political opponents through Community Councils and 'non-political groups' devoted to historical research as well as other activities. Local Tories could not deny these linkages or the (local) knowledge that others shared of them as a result, their opponents 'outing'

their political allegiances in front of the Assistant Commissioner during cross-examination¹⁰⁴.

Here, then, it is not always true that ‘connective terms’ carry ‘positive overtones’; an anthropologist might share with the would-be political activist a view that there is ‘something productive and generative in making connections’ (Strathern and Edwards 1999:152) but the question of which entities are linked at any given moment – and who makes such links – is an important one. Foregrounding the linkages between some elements over others imperilled certain claims in the same way that looking ‘progressively eastwards’ from rural Galloway to Dumfries strengthened certain kinds of connections over those that underpinned the case to ‘save’ the Dumfries constituency. Claims, then, are empowered less by the ways in which ambiguity is harnessed (cf. Seidel 1975) than by the kinds of connections political activists foreground as they seek to render others politically impotent.

(Re-) naming parts

I have argued that naming is vital to the making of political claims. Indeed, one ‘counter-proposal’ that the Scottish Conservatives lodged with the Boundary Commission involved re-naming the PCA constituency so that the ‘whole’ might better reflect its component ‘parts’. Local Tories argued that this would result in ‘less confusion’ about the new constituency, perhaps partly because local communities would feel better able to make a claim to it if they recognised themselves in its name. Ian L. observed:

¹⁰⁴ One Tory Party activist seemed especially unimpressed when he was asked whether he had been ‘the unsuccessful Conservative candidate’ for the Langholm Ward at the 1999 local Council elections. Other Conservative Party activists responded by asking similar questions of those

‘I do not accept that people are concerned about staying within the Dumfries constituency but I do accept they are concerned about the severance of links with Dumfries town... I believe that the name attributed to the new constituency has caused some of the concern and believe if the constituency was known as Dumfriesshire, Biggar and Peebles (or Tweeddale), then people would have a better understanding that a substantial part of the constituency will be in Dumfriesshire...’

Councillor Hyslop added:

‘... [The] proposed name of the constituency has caused a great deal of confusion and particularly in the Dumfries area, since the term Annandale refers only to the Annan Valley and the term which would incorporate the whole of the rural areas to be included in the proposed constituency would be Dumfriesshire. I believe that if people understood that they were in a constituency that was predominantly made up of Dumfriesshire they would feel a lot more comfortable with the Commission’s proposals.’

During his presentation, the former Tory MP for Dumfries Lord Monro stated:

‘... [As] two thirds of the old Dumfries constituency will be within the new Peebles, Clydesdale and Annandale constituency it would be better named Dumfriesshire, Biggar and Peebles.’

Meanwhile, Donald B. from Moffat said:

‘Whilst Moffat is in Annandale ... Dumfriesshire represents a better description of all the communities, in that Annandale, Eskdale, Nithsdale are all part of Dumfriesshire and ... should appear in the title.’

Labour Party supporters who failed to identify where their political loyalties lay when giving their own evidence.

The Boundary Commission later revised its recommendations but these were not published until after the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections held on 1 May 2003. Amongst several changes (see Chapter Eight), a new name for the PCA constituency was proposed: Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (DCT). While many agreed that this name better reflected the component parts of the new constituency, it still seemed a ‘mouthful’ to many political activists, many of whom continued to describe it as being composed of ‘leftovers’. Indeed, the Scottish Conservative candidate for DCT at the 2005 General Election would later joke that the acronym for this new Parliamentary constituency sounded like ‘an unpleasant medical condition’.

To sum up, in considering how disparate entities were linked at the public inquiry described in this chapter, a number of assumptions from which political activists worked were exposed. These included the idea that local ties between communities were important; that such ties enabled people in some places to make claims to others; and that, once connected, claims – and places – travel. Most importantly, political activists shared a view that ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ elements are opposed to each other, although some suggested that they could be linked together to produce ‘a good mix’ of heterogeneous elements that mediate each other. Furthermore, some political activists described the proposed, new PCA constituency as ‘a hybrid unit’ because – distilled of those (urban) elements that would link (mediate) what otherwise becomes (rural) leftovers – it was composed of disparate parts that could not be related to the whole. As such, its component communities would encounter difficulty in making a proprietorial claim to a Member of Parliament in contrast to, say, those within the Dumfries constituency. Putting a name (*Doonhamer*) to a place (Dumfries) matters. It invokes a set of

connections – a hybrid – that differentiates between as well as aggregates (locates) persons, places and – in the example of arguing over the making of Parliamentary constituencies – democratic institutions.

Part Two

The lesser-spotted Tory

Chapter Five

In search of the lesser-spotted Tory

Staying (ir-) relevant in the aftermath of crisis

‘Politics has changed and politics is changing.’

South of Scotland Tory MSP Alex Fergusson, addressing local Conservative Party activists in February 2003

The late Pierre Bourdieu once described Parliamentary democracy as a struggle in which the most important agents – political Parties – were engaged ‘in a *sublimated form of civil war*’ (1991:181). In the light of the Boundary Commission public inquiry discussed in Part One, this metaphor might seem appropriate for describing what might seem a kind of dress rehearsal for both the Labour and Conservative Parties for the electoral ‘battle’ that would be fought the following year. However, I want to suggest that in applying this metaphor to local politics as I initially encountered it, Dumfries and Galloway more accurately resembled a battlefield from which the local Conservative Party could be said to have vacated. Indeed, what made local Conservatives of potential ethnographic interest was their apparent *absence* (cf. Coutin 2005) from local political debate: the fact that the Scottish Tory is, so to speak, ‘lesser spotted’.

Following two chapters about the Boundary Commission’s controversial proposals, this observation might seem counter-intuitive. However, when I was attending meetings about FMD recovery and meeting political activists during the first few months of my fieldwork, it often seemed like there was never a Tory in sight. Of course, this was

not strictly the case; Conservative Parliamentarians tended to be vocal participants at meetings of the SUP and other similar 'Partnerships'. But they often seemed to be lone individuals without any (visible) backing and non-Tory political activists tended to talk about them *as if they were not there* (see below). Furthermore, it was easy to identify political activists from other Parties through the Crichton University Campus, where many students engaged with local and national politics. During the first year of my fieldwork, I went to several meetings and functions organised by the local Liberal Democrats; a Burns Supper hosted by the local Labour Party; two SNP meetings; and several seminars on Afghanistan, Iraq and the so-called 'war on terror', all of which were convened by the newly-formed local branch of the Scottish Socialist Party. At all of these meetings, Conservatives were the subject of much discussion – especially the legacy of Margaret Thatcher and the unpopular Poll Tax – but were, of course, absent and therefore unable to speak for themselves. I was conscious at the Crichton University Campus that some students were potential Conservative Party activists and supporters. Rumours circulated regarding the political views of some students. I had strong suspicions about a mature student who lived in a (rural) Council Ward represented by a popular, local Tory councillor with whom he shared the same, hyphenated surname. But the important point to highlight is that I never saw individuals like this man discuss politics with other students – although when I finally quizzed him, he explained that 'while a few people' knew he was a Conservative, he tried to keep quiet about such things at University: 'you know what students can be like'¹⁰⁵. Identifying Tories was a

¹⁰⁵ I tutored on an introductory course at the Crichton University Campus and this individual had been one of my students. In December 2002, I attended my first Tory Party event: Christmas drinks at a big house near Lockerbie. A Conservative MSP introduced me to the owner of the house and Chairman of the local branch – the very student about whom I had been suspicious.

problem that potentially went even deeper, however; when I asked one, well-placed informant if he could help me make some local Conservative Party contacts, he seemed baffled and exclaimed that he did not know any Conservatives. After thinking about my request for a few minutes, he mentioned the name of one prominent landowner that he knew well and said: 'I guess he might be a Tory – but then I've never asked him',¹⁰⁶.

Everywhere, I found political activists and other observers of local politics who were keen to talk to me. This was, perhaps, part of the problem: those who sought me out tended to draw me into networks that inevitably precluded me from making contact with local Tories. Within such networks, a common caricature of the predicament facing local Conservatives was that they had retreated to their '*big hooses*' outside of the town, where what was left of their once-insurmountable support base had been reduced to a handful of prominent farmers and landowners – the so-called 'County Set'. 'Only the 'squire-archy' vote Tory these days,' so one Labour Party activist told me. 'No one votes Conservative anymore,' added an SNP activist, 'except the Colonel from Carsphairn.' Allegedly, even some of the County Set no longer supported the Conservatives. The wife of one local landowner – a Liberal Democrat – explained that the local Conservative Party had selected a candidate in the 2001 General Election who fit 'the County' stereotype perfectly: a retired Lieutenant-Colonel whose family had owned land in Dumfriesshire over several centuries. She claimed to know for a fact that 'even some of his friends didn't vote for him'.

My 'surprise' was later replaced by embarrassment when I won the evening's (non-alcoholic) raffle prize.

¹⁰⁶ I later learnt that this individual was an important financial donor to the local Conservative Party.

Prior to the publication of the Boundary Commission proposals in February 2002, it was also difficult to discern much in the way of Conservative Party activity from local newspapers. From time to time, stories would appear featuring the Conservative MP for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Peter Duncan, or either of the two South of Scotland Tory Members of the Scottish Parliament – Alex Fergusson or David Mundell. The issues on which these stories were based ranged from FMD, the future of rural schools, the ‘drugs menace’ facing communities across the region and alleged ‘traffic chaos’ in Dumfries. Less often, Conservative councillors would be quoted¹⁰⁷ but this newspaper coverage seemed sparse compared to local Labour Members of Parliament, whose photographs seemed appeared constantly in both the *Courier* and the *Standard*.

Despite their apparent ‘absence’ from local politics, however, the Scottish Tories seemed – according to some of their opponents – to constitute an electoral threat locally, even if they had become ‘irrelevant’ in the ‘new’ politics of post-devolution Scotland. ‘There is still a lot of support for the Conservatives in this town,’ said one Labour Party activist over a pint of ale. ‘They just keep to themselves; they’re very discreet.’ On another occasion, this informant explained to me that it was not in the nature of Conservatives to wear their politics on their sleeves, or to be open and vocal about their political opinions. ‘But don’t underestimate the depth of support that still exists for them in Dumfries,’ he warned me. These statements resonated with journalistic impressions, as noted in Chapter One, of Dumfries and Galloway as ‘natural’ Tory territory in a country (Scotland) that remained hostile to Conservatism. Indeed, the Scottish Conservatives had held the two Parliamentary seats contained within the region’s

¹⁰⁷ Tory councillors appeared more regularly in those newspapers published in Annandale and Eskdale, where five of the nine Tory councillors were based.

boundaries until the 1997 General Election. One of them – the Dumfries constituency, which had been held by the popular Sir (now Lord) Hector Monro from his narrow victory over the local Labour Party at a by-election in 1964 – had been considered the second safest Tory seat in Scotland during the 1990s¹⁰⁸. Not only was there a lot of affection for Lord Monro amongst political activists of all persuasions; many talked of Dumfries as if it still was a ‘*wee Tory toon*’¹⁰⁹. Meanwhile, the anti-devolutionist Secretary of State for Scotland – the Rt Hon Ian Lang – had represented Galloway and Upper Nithsdale since the 1979 General Election, when he had won the seat ‘back’ for the Conservatives from the SNP, which had represented the constituency for five years.

As my fieldwork progressed, I became intrigued about the so-called electoral ‘plight’ of the ‘lesser spotted Tory’ and, increasingly, I wanted to make contact with local Conservative Party activists to question them about the political challenges they believed they faced in local and national politics. As it happened, around the time of the Boundary Commission public inquiry, local Conservative Party strategists had begun making preparations for the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections scheduled to take place on Thursday, 1 May 2003. In this chapter, then, I describe my early engagements with local Conservative Party activists – an engagement that quickly paid intellectual dividends, in ways that exceeded my own expectations.

Drawing on Coutin (2005), I argue that local Tories are defined, in part, by their ‘absence’ from popular narratives that equate political ‘progress’ in Scotland with the

¹⁰⁸ The ‘safest’ seat was Eastwood, just outside Glasgow. Few Scottish Conservatives had anticipated defeat in these two constituencies before the 1997 General Election.

¹⁰⁹ This description was used on the menu at the Labour Party Burns Supper I attended in January 2002. Held in memory of a recently deceased Labour Party activist who had been prominent in the community – and had been the candidate Lord Monro defeated when he was first elected in 1964 – almost 200 people attended, including many important, local opinion-formers.

successful campaign for a Scottish Parliament (cf. Hearn 2000, 2002). However, even if the voices of local Conservatives went largely unheard in local politics, most non-Tory political activists held strong views about the Conservative Party locally and nationally¹¹⁰. For many people, the Scottish Conservatives constituted a kind of ‘villain’ in contemporary Scottish politics because of – amongst other factors, as I discuss below – their traditional hostility to the Scottish Parliament¹¹¹. Key local Conservative Party strategists were usually aware of the ways in which their opponents viewed them. Like the political activists I encountered at the Boundary Commission public inquiry, however, they worked with what was familiar to them when faced with the uncertainty of how to best address this ‘image’ problem. As a result, they focused their attention on questions of what I call *activist methodology*: key Conservative Party strategists tried to address the electoral challenges before them primarily in terms of overcoming the difficulties of building a modern, professional political campaign (cf. Jean-Klein 2002:47). This meant, in the first instance, mastering a number of bureaucratic issues that required careful ‘management’; consequently, they hoped to ‘catch up’ with the local Labour Party and the SNP, behind which they felt they had ‘fallen behind’ (cf. Levine 2004, Miyazaki 2003). Along with the political activists I shall discuss, I will focus my analysis on three ‘objects’ that came to discipline meetings of the local Tories’ Core Campaign Team: an

¹¹⁰ These views ranged from the very positive – such as the many, humorous stories about Lord Monro that I heard, which were told with considerable affection – to the extremely negative: one woman I knew blamed Margaret Thatcher for her husband’s small business going bankrupt during the 1980s.

¹¹¹ Some Conservatives, including members of the Scottish Tory Reform Group (STRG), supported devolution (cf. Hearn 2000). One STRG supporter who lived near Dumfries told me – with a hint of bitterness – that she remembered campaigning for a Scottish Parliament in the 1970s with many leading Tories, including Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP. A proud ‘One Nation’ Tory passionate about human rights, she believed the Party in Scotland had deteriorated dramatically following the death of the pro-devolution Tory MP Alick Buchanan-Smith in the early 1990s.

agenda and two spreadsheets. I then conclude this chapter with the example of one ‘lesser spotted Tory’ who, paradoxically, key Conservative Party strategists had to work hard to silence so that they could organise their campaign in such a way that would enable it to be ‘heard’.

Absence: ‘a Tory Free Scotland’

The so-called ‘wipe-out’ of the Scottish Conservatives at the 1997 General Election came after years of decline that some scholars (e.g. Seawright 1996, 1998, 1999, 2002) have traced back to the 1950s. Indeed, the Scottish Conservatives enjoyed a ‘high water mark’ when they won over 50% of the popular vote and over half the seats in Scotland at the 1955 General Election – the only time in Scottish electoral history when this has happened (cf. Hutchison 2001, Chapter Three). By the 1987 and 1992 General Elections, however, less than a quarter of Scots supported the Scottish Conservatives. Although popular backing for the Party had been falling over several decades, certain periods – such as the 1970s – saw significant drops in support. Then, after eighteen years in Government, the Party imploded in the run-up to the 1997 General Election at the local, national and UK levels – a political development that David Seawright (1999:1) describes as ‘nothing short of dramatic’.

Several theories exist to explain the decline of the Scottish Tories. These include an increasing identification of the Scottish Tories with their English colleagues during the 1980s and 1990s; internal conflict between the Thatcherite Right and the ‘One Nation’ wings of the Party, represented by Lord Forsyth and the Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind respectively; and the Conservatives’ U-turn on devolution, which the Party supported

during Prime Minister Ted Heath's Government but to which it became opposed under Margaret Thatcher¹¹². Other factors are thought to have included internal reforms and the centralisation of the Party's structure and administration¹¹³; the introduction of the Poll Tax North of the Border in the late 1980s; the loss of the working class Tory vote; and a more general 'left of centre' bias in Scottish politics that led many Scots to treat Thatcherism with suspicion. These theories are often a feature of general political discussion about the decline of the Scottish Conservatives but have only occasionally been interrogated by the social and political sciences. While the reasons behind Tory decline in Scotland may have failed to attract much scholarly interest, David Seawright has tried to address this question, which he calls a 'lacuna in our academic knowledge' (1999:195). However, some might find many of his conclusions surprising. For instance, contrary to the 'received wisdom' outlined here, Seawright suggests that the Scottish Conservatives lost no more support amongst their working class supporters than any other section of the population during the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, while the Poll Tax was a cause of considerable discontent when it was introduced in Scotland before England, Conservative Party support held up at the 1992 General Election when the Party increased its representation North of the Border from nine to eleven Parliamentary seats.

¹¹² Ironically, the Conservatives were the first political Party to embrace devolution, under Ted Heath (cf. Lang 2002).

¹¹³ These arguments usually concern the cutting of links between the Party's central administration and local networks of political activists. When the Scottish Unionist Party changed its name to the Conservatives in 1965, a process began by which a series of constitutional reforms centralised the Party's internal administration in Edinburgh and, later, London. By dismantling the Party's dual structure (split between an East and West Division) in Scotland, a 'reinforcing alienation' took place: 'as the party increasingly 'centralised' it lost the important local activists ... who could assuage feelings of alienation at the local level' (Seawright 1998:70). In Strathern's terms (1991, 1996), these networks were finally and comprehensively 'cut' when the Scottish Conservatives – now isolated as the only political Party opposed to Scottish 'Home Rule' – failed to retain any House of Commons seats at the 1997 general election.

In the light of these kinds of observations, Seawright argues that the decline of the Scottish Conservatives can be explained in part because of developments during the 1960s, when the Party introduced a number of internal reforms. These included moving away from its 'Unionist' credentials to place emphasis on 'Conservatism':

'Crucially, the changing developments in party organisation and identity in the sixties are the link between the moderate slippage in support then and the start of the dramatic fall in the seventies. The desire of the party elite to rid itself of a putative sectarian image led to what may be termed, the throwing out of the baby with the bathwater. A crucial aspect of Unionism was an ability to appeal to powerful symbols in Scottish culture which gave the party a Scottish identity irrespective of its stance on devolution. This the Conservative *boo-word* could not do. And subsequently this was the crucial ingredient the party lost in the sixties.' (Seawright 1999:200-201)

While this thesis is not concerned with explaining the decline of the Scottish Conservatives in sociological or other terms, I would suggest that Seawright's argument is one that a discipline like social anthropology is ideally placed to test. For my purposes here, it is worth noting the fact that Scottish Tories are largely absent from ethnographic and other scholarly accounts of Scotland resonates with journalistic claims that they are 'lesser spotted', as I noted in Chapter One. Such a view potentially reinforces any suggestion that the Scottish Conservatives have not just been ignored in political analyses of Scotland but also constitute a 'forgotten' people in the new political landscape of post-devolution Scotland.

The defeat of the Scottish Conservatives was a particularly traumatic – even apocalyptic – event in the minds of many of the political activists to whom I spoke, although many Tories had anticipated that their Party would perform badly at the 1997 General Election and that the Major Government would be defeated. When one political

activist introduced herself to me as a former local Councillor who had retired at the 1995 local Government elections because by then it had become clear ‘the rot was setting in’, this in itself was not a remarkable or unusual observation for many of my informants to make. Such impressions may have convinced a variety of political activists to approach the 1997 General Election with reluctance. One Tory candidate who stood in the local Council elections in 2003 explained that she had found canvassing during the 1997 General Election particularly stressful because of the hostility she encountered on the doorstep. Alleging that she had been spat on by a number of people, her experience was not improved by the fact that she was one of a handful of political activists with the ‘courage’ to canvas for the Scottish Conservatives at that time. In 2003, she refused to canvas on her own and seemed reluctant to do so even when in the company of other volunteers. Furthermore, amidst a growing mood of hostility towards the Scottish Conservatives during their last years in Government, the 1997 General Election also seemed like an appropriate time for the popular Conservative MP Hector Monro to retire – an event for which the Election Agent in the neighbouring constituency of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale was also planning for himself.

Given how few had actually thought the Scottish Tories would lose all of the eleven seats won in 1992, the catastrophic impact of this event on the Scottish Conservatives cannot be overstated. The Dumfries constituency, for instance, was widely considered a stronghold for the Scottish Tories. Meanwhile, the Rt. Hon Ian Lang had held the neighbouring constituency of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale for eighteen years, usually with a margin of several thousand over his main Opposition, the Scottish National Party. However, a long-serving Labour Councillor from Annan Russell Brown defeated

the Scottish Conservative candidate Struan Stevenson (who would later be elected to the European Parliament) in the Dumfries constituency in the 1997 General Election. Meanwhile, the SNP candidate Alasdair Morgan won Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, beating the Rt. Hon Ian Lang by almost six thousand votes. With losses elsewhere North of the Border, this General Election brought to an end eighteen years of Conservative Government and produced a 'Tory Free Scotland' in terms of both European Parliament and Westminster representation. In Dumfries and Galloway, official representation for the local Tories was reduced to just two local Councillors out of a total of seventy.

According to Conservative Party activists, the 1997 General Election was a terrible experience followed by 'dark days'. Stories circulated of one political activist attempting suicide during the final weeks of the campaign while the local Conservative Party Associations went into 'meltdown'. Another political activist from Stranraer described with bitterness how a jubilant SNP activist leapt onto the stage at Easterbrook Hall with a Scottish Saltire in his hands. Although one or two of my informants gave the Scottish Conservative candidate for the Dumfries constituency credit for almost single-handedly holding the campaign together during these difficult months, they all agreed that there was virtually nothing left in the aftermath of defeat. The Party's local infrastructure disintegrated so that at the time I commenced fieldwork on local Tories, record keeping was in disarray. No one could say for certain how many people were paid-up members of the Party Associations in both constituencies, or whether or not many of these individuals were 'political activists' at all. The majority of branches

remained little more than names on paper and the Party's cash flow was the subject of much concern. Staff turnover in the Associations' offices was also high¹¹⁴.

As traumatic as these experiences were for many Conservative Party activists, they were very rarely discussed by my ethnographic subjects, who tended to treat the events of 1997 as something of a mystery that defied rational explanation. Like social scientists in general, my informants left the reasons for Tory decline in Scotland largely unexplored. Seldom did I hear the 1997 General Election discussed in casual conversation, unless I raised it directly with them. Most political activists seemed reluctant to discuss the reasons for their defeat. On one occasion, I witnessed an interesting exchange between the former Election Agent for the Dumfries constituency – Molly W. – and a key Party strategist – Alan M. Sitting at a large table in the Conservative Party office in Castle Street, Dumfries, Molly W. was opening envelopes containing survey responses when she asked aloud:

‘You know, I just don’t understand it. Why did Dumfries go Labour [in 1997]? I mean, even in the 1970s, when Galloway went Scottish Nationalist, we kept hold of Dumfries. It’s always been Conservative. But why did it go Labour in 1997? I just don’t understand it.’

In response, an exasperated Alan M. declared:

¹¹⁴ Estimates of the local Conservative Party's membership in the Dumfries constituency varied between 400 and 700. In Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, it seemed to be somewhere in the vicinity of 700-900. Both Associations contained almost twenty branches, although there was little activity beyond their respective Management Committee and Executives. Only the Dumfries Conservative Ladies Lunch Club – the subject of much mythology within local Conservative Party circles – kept going during the ‘dark days’ that followed the 1997 General Election.

‘We lost Dumfries because everyone hated us in 1997! Nobody could stand us anymore!’

But Molly W. would not – or could not – entertain this possibility:

‘Don’t be ridiculous. You’re talking absolute nonsense. I have never heard such rubbish.’

And their conversation ended abruptly – and awkwardly.

Exchanges like this one – as rarely as they occurred – suggested to me that when Conservative Party activists posed such questions, they were not necessarily seeking answers. Such questions more often seemed to be asked out of a sense of despair. For instance, during the Count that took place at Easterbook Hall following Polling Day (see Chapter Seven), I encountered a handful of Tory Party activists drinking in a nearby pub. While all of them appeared stressed and a little emotional, one young political activist in particular – Chris A., who had helped leaflet in some small rural villages – seemed hysterical. ‘Why does everyone hate us?’ he wailed, his head in his hands:

‘Why don’t people vote for us anymore? What have we done?’

No one responded. Bemused, another young political activist – John D. – glanced at me and pointed to him. ‘Who is this guy?’ he mouthed. ‘Why can’t we win?’ cried Chris: ‘What have we done to make people hate us so much?’

Political activists’ refusal to know (cf. Riles 2003) the answer to a question that has could be said to have otherwise failed to fire the imaginations of scholars of Scottish politics served not as a point of departure, with which one might begin some kind of

analysis. Rather – like asserting that FMD was a crisis that affected everyone in Dumfries and Galloway, as I argued in Chapter Two – it seemed to function as an end point; the question closed off further discussion. Conservative Party activists spoke of their defeat as if the electorate, unprovoked, had visited suffering upon them (cf. Das 1995:20) rather than in terms of paying the price for political circumstances of the Conservatives' own creation. Moments like these were moments of despair; the question did not require an answer, just acknowledgement.

Despair seems an appropriate emotion with which to describe such verbal exchanges. I sometimes wondered whether my ethnographic subjects constituted in Malkki's terms 'an *accidental community of memory*' – a community that is 'less explicit and often more biographical, microhistorical,' sharing 'memory and transitory experience' (1997:91). Unlike the Rwandan refugees whom Malkki was discussing when she coined this phrase, many of the political activists described here may have encountered each other in their respective local communities, outwith Conservative Party – or even local political – circles. However, even though the events that led to the displacement of Rwandan refugees were undoubtedly and profoundly more traumatic for Malkki's ethnographic subjects than the 1997 General Election could be said to have been for Conservative Party activists in Scotland, the 'trauma' of being displaced institutionally seemed to leave 'traces and afterlives' (Malkki 1997:92-93). I do not want to suggest that the 'suffering' of Conservative Party activists somehow resembles or equals that of, say, Rwandan refugees fleeing ethnic genocide. Rather, the point to note is that there may be a useful theoretical point to be drawn from an analogy between the refugee – who has been displaced in a territorial sense – and a political activist that has

been displaced institutionally. The position of both the refugee and the political activist in this example raises questions of location (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997). In addition, recalling from Chapter One the work of Coutin (2005) on illegal immigration to the United States, thinking about the meaning of ‘absence’ for the lesser-spotted Tory might be useful at this juncture. To be clear, I am not equating local Conservative Party activists in rural Scotland to Salvadorans and others in the US who are rendered absent from legal accounts of migration. Rather, I suggest that it is popular narrative accounts of Scottish nationhood that equate political progress with the successful campaign for a Scottish Parliament that render Scottish Tories ‘absent’ in (narrative) time and space. As I discuss in later chapters, this absence – often presented in terms of a problem of ‘visibility’ – was a source of anxiety for many Conservative Party activists.

Hearn (2002:745) has noted that national identity ‘inevitably relies on the creation and use of narratives ... that imbue nations and nationalist projects with coherence and purpose’. In the example of Scotland, Hearn (2000, 2002) provides a neat summary of such a narrative in relation to the campaign for a new Parliament in 1999. Over three decades, a movement for constitutional change grew, ‘stimulated in the 1960s by rising economic expectations, in the 1970s by the vision of underwriting an independent Scotland with revenues from newly discovered North Sea oil, and in the 1980s and 1990s by a rejection of Thatcherism’ (Hearn 2002:745-746). Opposition to the neoliberal policies of the Thatcher-Major Conservative Governments was crucial to consolidating public opinion in Scotland behind ‘a strong devolved parliament’ (Hearn 2002:746). At the same time, support for the SNP and the Labour Party – which decided to back the cause of devolution during the 1980s – grew at the expense of the Scottish Conservatives

as pro-devolution activists flocked to a 'complex array of campaigning groups' (Hearn 2002:746), including Campaign for a Scottish Parliament, Common Cause, Democracy for Scotland and the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

I agree that this rendering of (banal) nationalism has become the dominant narrative of contemporary Scottish politics. However, Hearn draws on the work of social historian Margaret Somers (1992, 1994, 1995) to extend his analysis, arguing that individuals identify themselves in relation to dominant narratives 'according to how they express one of three paradigmatic agentic situations' (Hearn 2002:750). The first of these identifications involve those whose 'will and desire is compatible with and complimentary to the flow ... of an encompassing narrative' while the second accounts for individuals who 'run contrary' to such a dominant narrative, 'eliciting stoic resignation, or defiant resistance'. Meanwhile, others identify themselves at 'cross-currents' with the encompassing narrative, their will being 'relatively indeterminate ... eliciting either an anxious desire for a stronger narrative frame, or a confident sense of relatively unconstrained self-direction'. Remembering that these situations are 'ideal types' and that 'no individual life or collective history can be pigeon-holed into one of them' (Hearn 2002:750), I suggest that most local Conservative Party activists saw themselves as either being at odds or crosscurrents with the dominant narrative of contemporary Scottish politics described here. Given their defiant opposition to devolution, many exhibited signs of 'resignation' to the new politics of Scotland although others – such as Molly W. and Chris A. in the above ethnographic anecdotes – seemed bewildered to the extent that one might suggest they were unfamiliar with others' narratives about them. So while some political activists might seem at crosscurrents with

dominant narratives in Scotland, it might equally be possible to say that these two individuals lacked a (narrative) frame of reference, which then fuelled their anxiety about the political location of contemporary Conservatism North of the Border.

A traumatic event like the 1997 General Election seemed to possess an afterlife in a biographical sense for local Conservative Party activists partly because of the way in which it rendered their voices absent from popular political narrative frameworks about Scotland. Scottish Tories came to be associated with a hostile, Anglo-centric Other – a throwback to a politically ‘pre-modern’ Scotland (cf. Fabian 1983) – in such narratives. This point seemed to have particular resonance for the Rt. Hon Ian Lang MP – an ardent anti-devolutionist – who launched his autobiography at the local Wigtown Book Festival in October 2002. Reading extracts to a small audience on a cloudy Friday afternoon, it was clear from his presentation that the experience of losing at the 1997 General Election had been a very painful one for him. Describing devolution as ‘a catalyst for all political opposition’ and ‘a mantra that precluded rational discussion’, he explained that what particularly ‘rankled’ him was the accusation that in arguing against devolution, he and other Scottish Tories ‘did not love or care for Scotland and its historic destiny’ – a ‘low blow’, he said, that he ‘always found hurtful’ (2002:199). With a hint of bitterness, he then read the following (lengthy) extract from his book – before apologising to the audience if it sounded a little ‘overblown’:

‘I defer to no man in my love of Scotland. I have walked its rivers and glens in sun and in rain. I have sailed its western waters, where the shining islands beckon, ridden the Atlantic swell that crashes blue-green across the bow and whips the spray in one’s face. I have seen the evening light fall on drystone dykes that pattern the grass-green hills of Galloway. I have thrilled to the turn of an antler on a Highland hillside, where the mountains sweep the sky. I have heard

the grouse-croak; seen the first, wet glint of the silver grilse. I have watched autumn's browning bracken and the fattening berry on the rowan tree. I have seen great ships slide down the slipways of the Clyde, the cheers of the workers drowning out the grind and crackle of the restraining chains. I have smelt the grease and metal and sweat amid the steam and noise of engine workshops; and I have smelt the honeyed air of the moors, thick with the drowse of bees in heather. I have sat alone at the still of dusk, in a drifting boat on the black, glassy waters of Loch Duich, where the only sound was the drip of water from the blade of the resting oar, watching the pink fade from wisps of cloud above the Five Sisters of Kintail, as the western sky turned pale beyond the dark mass of the Cuillins. I have breathed deep that wild air, so free and sweet and almost palpable that all life's cares were carried away on the ripples of the wind. I defer to no man in my love of Scotland – my own, my native land.' (Lang 2002:199-200)

The material presented here suggests that political activists like Molly W. and others imagined local politics before the 1997 General Election as a kind of Golden Age (cf. Handler 1988:50-51) for the local Conservative Party. This idea was partly based on the reputation and legacy of Hector Monro, who had been a popular local MP and for whom much affection still existed – even amongst non-Tory political activists. It also resonates with the view of many journalists and other observers for whom Dumfries and Galloway constitutes 'natural' Tory territory. Indeed, the Rt Hon Ian Lang MP – who had won Galloway and Upper Nithsdale 'back' from the Scottish Nationalists in 1979 – described his constituency as 'a natural Tory seat that had gone wrong' (2002:43)¹¹⁵. From this perspective, the point to note is not just that the present was thought of as 'qualitatively poorer than the past' (Edwards 2000:170; cf. Cohen 1987; MacDonald 1997) but that it is also quantitatively poorer. Certainly, local Tories felt that they were working from a

¹¹⁵ The Rt. Hon Ian Lang MP was referring to the constituency for which he was selected prior to the 1979 General Election, observing that local Tories possessed 'massive determination to win it back' (2002:43).

much-diminished base of support with significantly depleted financial and other resources, legitimacy and, with the departure of long-serving MPs and key political activists in the immediate aftermath of the 1997 General Election, local knowledge. How, then, would local Conservative Party activists address their own, quite literal, 'crisis' in representation (cf. Clifford and Marcus 1986, Clifford 1988)?

Catching up: the work of the Core Campaign Team

After 1997, the Scottish Conservatives' electoral prospects did not improve quickly. This was partly because there was no consensus amongst Party activists as to how best to respond to the 'changed' political realities they now faced in Scotland. According to Mitchell et al (1998), the Scottish Conservatives were ill equipped to campaign against devolution – to which they remained opposed – in the months immediately following their 'wipe-out'. They became absorbed instead in the 'chaos' that consumed their Party that year:

'The Conservatives initially decided not to run a campaign but to work under the Think Twice umbrella. This was in recognition of the harm to the campaign if it was identified with the Conservatives. The official Conservative position was to oppose both the Parliament and the tax-varying powers. Having lost all their seats in Scotland at the general election, morale was very low, credibility was damaged, internal recriminations and bitter feuding were taking their toll. Party members were not in the mood for another potentially bruising encounter with the electorate. But it would be impossible for the Conservatives to say nothing.' (Mitchell et al 1998:177)

Tory opposition to devolution at this late hour does not appear to have counted for much in the 1997 Referendum, although some might consider it no accident that Dumfries and Galloway was one of only two local Authority areas in Scotland that did not endorse the

new Parliament with a 'Yes-Yes' vote¹¹⁶. The important point to note, though, is that the base from which local Conservatives believed they were building could not have been lower. Furthermore, my informants felt that in contrast the local Labour Party had built a powerful political machine that was difficult for any other political group to match. Local Tory Party activists felt outnumbered and outgunned by what they saw as a ruthless, well-organised and highly disciplined local Labour Party. In their view, Labour Party activists would stop at nothing in the pursuit of victory; to this end, some Labour Party strategists were said to deliberately cultivate a 'thuggish' persona. One Conservative Party activist – who was elected to the local Council in 2003 – explained to me that the local Labour Party's Election Agent was never one to work alone:

'They [Labour Party activists] like to hunt in packs. Our people do not like getting involved in local politics because they find it intimidating. There aren't many of us and those of us who try to get on to things have to fight on our own.'

A Tory MSP regularly referred to the above-mentioned Labour Party activist as 'the Prince of Darkness' and noted that with a couple of colleagues, he would stage dramatic entrances to meetings 'as if he was Darth Vader or something'. On one occasion before the opening of the postal ballots at the 2003 Scottish Parliament election, he explained in response to my scepticism:

'Don't get me wrong: they cultivate this image. Just watch how they enter the building. They dress in black, sweep into the room and act like they run the place.'

¹¹⁶ The other region to oppose tax-varying powers for the Scottish Parliament was the Orkney Islands, which could hardly be described as a former Tory Party stronghold. For this reason, I am sceptical about extrapolating too much from any apparent correlation between the alleged 'strength' of the Scottish Tories in Southwest Scotland and local attitudes towards devolution.

Meanwhile, another local Tory Councillor alleged that a well-known Labour Party activist had assaulted her husband during the counting of the ballot papers following the 1997 General Election.

However, by the time I started my fieldwork in Dumfries and Galloway, the electoral prospects of the local Conservatives had improved. At the 1999 Scottish Parliament elections, the introduction of Proportional Representation (PR) enabled two local Tory candidates to get elected to the Scottish Parliament through the South of Scotland Regional List. These two individuals – David Mundell and Alex Fergusson – had stood for the Dumfries constituency and the neighbouring seat of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, losing them to the Labour Party's Elaine Murray and the then SNP MP for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Alasdair Morgan respectively. Following these elections, the local Conservative Party offices in Dumfries and Castle Douglas received a small injection of funds and administrative support so that, amongst some other items, new computers and photocopiers were purchased.

In local elections also held that year, the number of Tory Councillors quadrupled from two to eight at a time when the total number of Councillors was reduced from over seventy to just forty-seven. In European elections held soon afterwards, the Scottish Conservatives won two out of seven Members of the European Parliament on a very low turnout of voters. One of these successful candidates was the former Scottish Conservative candidate for the Dumfries constituency at the 1997 General Election, Struan Stevenson. Finally, a by-election victory against a divided Labour Party in the Solway Border Ward gave local Conservatives additional hope that they might enjoy

future electoral success. Despite these various improvements, key Tory strategists tended to believe that the Party continued to struggle because of poor campaign organisation at the local level. When local Conservatives won a Ward or a Parliamentary constituency – as rarely as these events seemed to occur in Scotland – their successes were often attributed to chance, the disinterest of local voters (translating into a low turnout at the Poll) or the incompetence of the Opposition rather than sound, Tory electoral strategy. As a result, many Conservative Party activists saw themselves as engaged in a kind of guerrilla warfare on local issues, snatching victories from others when Opposition Parties were caught off guard. These observations seemed particularly relevant in accounting for the election of Peter Duncan as Scotland's (then) only Tory MP at the 2001 General Election – by far the most important electoral achievement of the Scottish Conservatives at the time of my fieldwork. In the aftermath of the FMD crisis, he beat a young, inexperienced SNP candidate by just 74 votes in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale following Alasdair Morgan's decision to retire from Westminster¹¹⁷. Given that the Labour MP for Dumfries Russell Brown defeated the Scottish Conservative candidate Lt Col John Charteris by roughly 10,000 votes that year further highlighted Peter Duncan's 'good luck' in rural Galloway, although some optimistic Conservatives described Mr Duncan's victory as a 'breakthrough' or 'turning point' in local politics.

I engaged directly with key local Conservative Party strategists in the aftermath of the Boundary Commission public inquiry, through which I had become acquainted with many of them. At that time, many of the Conservative Party activists whom I met despaired that their past campaigns had been organised in an amateur and ad-hoc fashion. Key Tory strategists believed that with further co-ordination and an injection of

¹¹⁷ For more on that election, see Butler and Kavanagh (2002).

‘professionalism’ into their campaign planning, their chances of winning ‘back’ the two Parliamentary constituencies contained within Dumfries and Galloway at the 2003 Scottish Parliament elections would be significantly increased. I therefore benefited from engaging with key Tory Party strategists at the precise moment when they were drawing up campaign plans for the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections.

Following Miyazaki (2003, 2004), the argument I want to make here, then, is concerned with how local Conservative Party activists built up a sense of prospective momentum in order to ‘catch up’ with and overtake the best organised and strongest of their political opponents: the local Labour Party. Indeed, following the 1999 local Council elections, a ‘Rainbow Alliance’ Administration formed – led by Labour councillors, and including Liberal Democrats, the SNP and ‘Independents’ like Provost Cameron and Beth Gordon – in opposition to local Tories. Sometimes described by my informants as ‘the new political establishment’, the existence of this Administration meant that the local Labour MP and MSP could call upon the support of a Labour-led Council Administration on many local issues, often to the exclusion of local Tory councillors and Parliamentarians.

‘Catching up’ with the local Labour Party meant, in the first instance, ‘getting organised’. To this end, key Conservative Party strategists formed a ‘Core Campaign Team’, which would seek to co-ordinate the Scottish Parliament campaign in the two local constituencies alongside that for the Dumfries and Galloway Council elections in a ‘joined up’ way (cf. Fairclough 2000)¹¹⁸. This Core Campaign Team met at 8.30am

¹¹⁸ Alex Fergusson had his own Campaign Team in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale while David Mundell directly managed his own activities with the assistance of his Election Agent, Alan M. The Core Campaign Team sought to minimise ‘duplication’ between these different campaigns as

every Monday morning, from 6 January until Polling Day on 1 May 2003¹¹⁹. The local Conservative MP Peter Duncan chaired the Core Campaign Team, which also included the two Members of the Scottish Parliament running for the Dumfries constituency as well as Galloway and Upper Nithsdale respectively – David Mundell and Alex Fergusson. The Leader of the Conservative Council Group, Allan Wright, was also part of the Core Campaign Team, as were two Election Agents – Alan M. and Hazel D¹²⁰. Finally, I was invited to meetings of this small group of key Tory Party activists, partly in the hope that I might bring something ‘new’ to these discussions¹²¹.

Meetings of the Core Campaign Team took place in the Conservative Party office on Castle Street, Dumfries. They discussed a wide range of issues relating to the making of the Conservative Party’s campaign across the region¹²². These discussions focused on

well as harness the Party’s resources across the region to maximise ‘exposure’ for winning Council Wards in the upcoming elections.

¹¹⁹ During April 2003, the Core Campaign Team met twice a week in order to ‘keep up’ with the pace of the campaign.

¹²⁰ An Election Agent is a salaried professional who assists with the administration and management of local Conservative Party Associations and the political campaigns they organise. There were two such individuals employed in Dumfries and Galloway at the time of my fieldwork.

¹²¹ I was able to put local Conservatives at ease with my presence at such meetings by referring them to my curriculum vitae. In Australia, I had been very active in the Liberal Party, which most local Conservatives considered an ideological ‘fellow traveller’ without needing to ask me about the nature or extent of my political activism during this period. Furthermore, having worked for Federal Parliamentarians – including a Cabinet Minister – and possessing experience of running political campaigns in student, local, State and Federal elections, I tended to be viewed as someone off whom ideas ‘could be bounced’ and I became (in their eyes) a member of the Core Campaign Team. A metaphor that seemed appropriate for describing my location during this phase in my fieldwork was one of being ‘embedded’ – much like those CNN reporters who travelled with US troops in the early months of the Iraq war (cf. Agger 2005). Alternatively, one might suggest that my role as a kind of political in-comer was analogous to that of the ‘internationals’ Coles (2002) describes in her fieldwork on elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

¹²² Latour (1987:2-3) has argued that scientific inventions are often treated like a ‘black box’, a complex ‘piece of machinery’ or ‘set of commands’ for which only ‘input and output count’. How might the analyst ‘open’ such a box? Latour suggests that this can be achieved by treating scientific controversies as science-in-the-making (1987:4). There might be an instructive lesson here for treating an election campaign – which I also believe tends to be regarded as a mysterious ‘black box’ – instead as a *campaign-in-the-making*.

three discursive artefacts (cf. Riles 2001) that constituted – for organisational purposes – the essential components of the campaign that was in the making. The first of these was a standard agenda (see Figure 6), the items of which structured the meeting. This agenda broke the campaign down to those component parts that key Tory Party strategists deemed essential, which therefore demanded some discussion on a weekly basis. The main individual items on the agenda – Candidates and Council Group; Media and Message; Literature and Leaflets – provided members of the Core Campaign Team with mental ‘cues’ to remind them about the ongoing campaign priorities that required some discussion at each meeting. Along with the two spreadsheets discussed below, these discursive artefacts ‘stood’ (cf. Latour 1993, Wagner 1986) for the Tory Party campaign. As a result, they were imagined to be both ‘manipulable [objects] of use’ and, taken together, ‘an operation’ that produced social effects (Strathern 1996:522).

In the next chapter, I will discuss some of these ‘effects’ in relation to four instruments that political activists considered vital in their campaign armoury: the survey, the press release, the leaflet and the target letter. These instruments were often ‘flagged’ in the spreadsheets and featured during discussions of the Core Campaign Team. In the remainder of this section, however, I want to outline the two spreadsheets Conservative Party strategists used in order to lay out the ‘building blocks’ with which they would build a ‘whole’ campaign (cf. Strathern 1992a). The first of these spreadsheets – entitled ‘Dumfries and Galloway Council Campaign – Campaign Plan’ (Figure 8) – was produced during the first couple of weeks of January 2003. Providing a breakdown of what items of ‘literature’ were to be distributed on which days of the campaign, the Campaign Plan enabled members of the Core Campaign Team to anticipate what and when certain

discursive objects would be required. As a result, key Tory strategists could project their campaign into the coming weeks and months. As time ticked down towards Polling Day – marked in a column on the left-hand side numbering ‘D –’ however many days were left in the campaign – they could build a sense of prospective momentum (cf. Miyazaki 2003). This was achieved by combining two, contradictory temporal orientations: the first driven by anticipation of the work that had been planned and the second from an anxiety that one is ‘running out of time’ in which to complete this work. By bringing one temporal orientation to the foreground at the expense of the other – with which it remains otherwise incongruous and must therefore be relegated to the background – prospective momentum is generated (Miyazaki 2003:256; cf. Edwards 2000:248).

Furthermore, these two orientations created a sense of temporal incongruity that I suggest proved productive for senior Conservative Party activists trying to address a theoretical problem with which anthropologists and social scientists are also confronted: ‘how to access the now’ (Miyazaki 2003:255). If Conservative Party strategists felt that they had ‘fallen behind’ the local Labour Party, then building prospective momentum by imaginatively projecting their campaign into the future became an exercise in ‘catching up’ (to the present). Viewed in this way, temporal incongruity is written into a spreadsheet like the Campaign Plan, which was a device to which key Conservative Party activists felt the local Tories had come belatedly (Miyazaki 2003:256). In addition, the sense that political activists were ‘running out of time’ as they approached Polling Day grew especially acute given the fact that the workload detailed within the Campaign Plan was very demanding. Conservative Party activists found ‘delivering’ on this Plan extremely burdensome but they nevertheless laboured hard to outperform the local

Labour Party and produce what they hoped would be ‘seen’ as a modern, professional political campaign (cf. Jean-Klein 2002:49). After all, the use of spreadsheets to plan a campaign in this way was considered by many political activists to be ‘novel’ and ‘innovative’ compared to the allegedly ad-hoc fashion in which they had previously organised (cf. Levine 2004:96-97).

The Campaign Plan, then, worked to create a sense of temporal incongruity that enabled Conservative Party activists to build a sense of prospective momentum to ‘catch up’ with the local Labour Party. However, another important spreadsheet – entitled ‘Council Candidates’ (Figure 7) – provided them with a means of assessing the progress of their campaign by situating their support base spatially. This spreadsheet became important once key Conservative Party strategists decided to nominate a Tory candidate in every one of the forty-seven Council Wards across Dumfries and Galloway. There were several reasons behind this decision but two in particular were considered very important. Firstly, local Conservative Party strategists thought it was vital to present their supporters with the ‘choice’ of voting Tory, regardless of whether or not they lived in a Ward that was considered winnable. Presenting local people with such a choice seemed particularly important given that the local Conservatives were the only political group that remained outside of – and potentially opposed to – the Council Administration. Furthermore, key Conservative Party strategists hoped that many local people would vote for them if their hunch that the Council Administration was very unpopular across the region proved correct.

Secondly, the Core Campaign Team believed that the Conservative Party’s campaign for the local Council elections might provide the building blocks for their two

Scottish Parliamentary campaigns¹²³. For instance, because there were limits to how much money an individual candidate could spend in their own campaign, the best way of maximising the finances a political Party could spend during their campaign (if ‘joined up’ in this way) was to maximise the number of candidates standing for that Party. For the first time ever in their history, local Conservatives eventually succeeded in finding a candidate for every Council Ward across Dumfries and Galloway. This meant that the costs of campaigning for both the Scottish Parliament and the local Council could be shared across dozens of candidates as, for example, candidates ‘doubled up’ on the same leaflets (see Chapter Six). It was also hoped that maximising the number of local Conservatives standing in the elections would help motivate political activists to mobilise the Tory vote on Polling Day, so that the two Scottish Parliament constituencies would also be won.

As a result, discussions of the Core Campaign Team often focused on identifying prospective candidates in particular Wards (under the agenda item ‘Candidates and Council Group’). These discussions usually constituted a kind of *para*-ethnography (Levine 2004, Marcus 2002) where Conservative Party activists speculated about the political allegiances of leading, local opinion-formers – usually in terms of their family or occupational backgrounds – that they then might attempt to recruit as Council candidates. The spreadsheet would be consulted in this way to identify ‘gaps’ (cf. Riles 2001) that needed to be filled with a local Tory candidate. Once a person had agreed to stand for a particular Ward – and a name had been substituted for a blank space on the spreadsheet – key Tory Party strategists spoke as if a building block had successfully been put in place.

¹²³ Perhaps local Conservative Party strategists took a cue here from the Boundary Commission, which regarded Council Wards as ‘building blocks’ for Parliamentary constituencies.

As these gaps were progressively ‘plugged’, political activists cast their eyes across this spreadsheet and the Conservative Party campaign would appear to come in and out of focus ‘like a picture with a low resolution’ (Coutin 2003:201). This continued until the picture became bold and clear – with all the gaps filled – just a few days before the close of nominations in April 2003. In sum, the two spreadsheets described here – taken together – allowed senior Conservative Party strategists to imagine their campaign working *as if* it was a machine whose parts had started to function, like clockwork across time and space¹²⁴.

Staying (ir-) relevant

One question that the Core Campaign Team debated at some length was deceptively simple: how can a political Party that stands little chance of winning national Government in Scotland make itself ‘relevant’ in an election? If no one believed that Tories could win the Scottish Parliament elections, why would local voters want to support the Scottish Conservatives? Furthermore, one senior Conservative Party strategist argued that local Tories were not presented merely with the problem that few thought they were ‘relevant’ in national politics; it was also entirely implausible to suggest that the Scottish Labour Party might lose the election¹²⁵. Not only was there little incentive to motivate Conservative supporters to turn up and vote on Polling Day; there was not much to encourage voter turnout at all when the outcome of the election – a

¹²⁴ Levine (2004:97) might suggest that the ‘as if’ works here along the same lines as for academics seeking new ground for theoretical innovation.

¹²⁵ The system of Proportional Representation (PR) used in Scottish Parliament elections virtually guarantees the Labour Party of being the largest MSP grouping. Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats had by this time made it known they would seek to re-form Coalition Government with the Scottish Labour Party following the 2003 elections.

second term for a Labour-Liberal Democrat Scottish Executive – was not really in question.

Key Conservative Party strategists generally felt that both a cause and a consequence of their ‘wipe out’ in 1997 was that they had ‘lost touch’ with local communities across Dumfries and Galloway. To persuade local people to vote for the Scottish Conservatives, they therefore believed that, in the first instance, they needed to help local voters ‘see’ the lesser-spotted Tory in order to remind them that some of them had, in fact, ‘survived’ that apocalyptic election. The fact a Campaign Plan had been drafted that demanded the distribution of thousands of leaflets and other related ‘literature’ went some way to increasing the local Conservative Party’s profile and promoting a sense of (Tory) activism and organisation across the region. Armed with the Campaign Plan, key Conservative Party strategists turned their minds to another challenge: how to ‘connect’ with local people and make the local Tories relevant again.

Of course, the Scottish Conservatives were not exactly irrelevant to popular renderings of Scottish politics. I have already noted that as opponents of devolution, they have come to occupy a somewhat ‘villainous’ role in contemporary narratives that equate political progress in Scotland with the successful campaign for a Scottish Parliament. In Dumfries and Galloway, local Tories were often caricatured as a group of unrepentant farmers, upper class landowners and retired Colonels, which allowed their opponents to associate the Scottish Conservatives with an Anglo-centric, politically ‘pre-modern’ (rural) past. Such caricatures highlighted how ‘out of touch’ the Conservative Party had become in Scotland. The Core Campaign Team and other key Conservative Party activists were keen to discard these stereotypes.

I have already mentioned John Charteris, who had been the unsuccessful Scottish Conservative candidate in the Dumfries constituency at the 2001 General Election. Apparently bitter in defeat, he had been a committed letter-writer to local newspapers throughout 2002, much to the annoyance of key Conservative Party strategists. A landowner whose grandfather had briefly been a local MP in the 1920s, John Charteris was a retired Lieutenant Colonel who had served in the first Gulf War. He therefore held strong views about issues relating to Defence and the welfare of the Armed Forces. Key Conservative Party activists viewed his associations with the wealthy County Set in Dumfriesshire and his stubborn determination to argue the case for military intervention in Iraq as an incendiary combination.

Around the time of the Boundary Commission public inquiry, Lt Col Charteris wrote a letter criticising the local branch of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) for joining a national strike. On 15 November 2002 – the day after local fire fighters picketed the Dumfries Fire Station – the *Courier* published his letter – entitled ‘Pay Demands unjustified’ – in which Lt Col Charteris compared the starting wage of a fireman (£17,000) with that of a junior soldier (£9,000). Describing the fire fighters’ demand for a 40% pay rise as ‘greedy’, he asked readers to ‘spare a thought for our servicemen’:

‘They are not squaddies, they are professionals and acknowledged as the best in the world. The modern technology of the current fire engine makes the job of fire fighting and rescue easier, not more difficult. The serviceman’s job is more difficult because they ... operate and maintain armoured fighting vehicles, fast jets, helicopters, warships as well as all manner of wheeled and tracked vehicles. The Government and local authorities should authorise servicemen to use the publicly owned fire fighting equipment. ... The fireman’s strike would also end much more quickly because the firemen would not want the public to realise that although their service is very necessary, it is also highly restrictive and already

over paid compared to the pay of our servicemen, the nurses and most civil servants.’ (The *Courier*, 15 November 2002)

Responding with ‘disbelief’ to Lt Col Charteris’ ‘arrogant rant’, one local fireman – Andy A. – argued in a letter to the editor published the following week that junior soldiers received many benefits not offered to fire fighters. Furthermore:

‘I’m sorry Mister Charteris (retired firefighters don’t pretend they are still in the job using ranks before their names – when we retire we are just that – proud, but retired public servants) you as a Lt Col would hardly have been deployed on the street as a stand-in firefighter, that would have [been] beneath a rank like yours – so your current colleagues providing temporary fire cover tell me! I doubt your lily whites have ever had a coat of grime on them, never mind handled hose!’ (The *Courier*, 22 November 2002)

In addition, ‘crews do much more than attend fire calls’, and the fireman challenged Lt Col Charteris to present himself at the fire station to do ‘a 42 hour watch’ with them: ‘I suspect you will be soaked in sweat by the end of the first hour – without ever going near an ‘emergency’.’ His stinging personal attack ended with a rebuttal of Lt Col Charteris’ idea of what constituted ‘greed’:

‘So he feels the right to feed and clothe our children, keep a roof over our heads and have an acceptable standard of living is greed? I’m sure Mister Charteris has never wanted for anything, and so long as there are EEC and DEFRA agricultural subsidies he never will.’ (The *Courier*, 22 November 2002)

In a similar letter published in *The Standard* on 27 November 2002, another fire fighter – Scott A. – described Lt Col Charteris’ comparison between the military and the fire service as ‘petty’ and suggested that he ‘tunes into the real world’. According to Scott A., the fire fighters’ strike was just too serious to invite the involvement of ‘political

glory seekers', after which he concluded that he was 'another undervalued public servant who won't be voting for Labour or the Tories, and especially not for Mr Charteris, should he dare to stand again' for the Dumfries constituency.

Lt Col Charteris – who had a reputation for being unable to resist the temptation to have the last word on any debate – declared 'I'm ready for my fire watch shift' in a letter that appeared the following week:

'Last week I attempted to take up the challenge from Fire-Fighters ... to do a tour with the Dumfries Fire-Fighters. The challenge was made in their letters to The Courier. Unfortunately, nobody was available from their side for the challenge. Why? Because they were all on strike again.' (*Dumfries Courier*, 29 November 2002)

Whether or not Lt Col Charteris had actually turned up to the Fire Station for his 'tour of duty' with the firemen, most of my informants believed he was the sort of person who would have done so. However, what made Lt Col Charteris' letters so 'unhelpful' from the perspective of key Conservative Party strategists was his obvious association with them as the local Party's former candidate at the 2001 General Election. Indeed, after David Mundell MSP, he was probably the most recognisable face of the local Conservative Party at that time. Unlike Mr Mundell, his antics in the letters' pages of local newspapers served to render him in the eyes of many people – including some Conservatives – the caricature of a local landowning 'toff' who behaved as if he was 'born to rule'.

A vocal member of both the Countryside Alliance and the self-styled 'Rural Rebels' who had opposed the foxhunting ban, he was also keen to debate issues like the Hunting Bill – which came into force in August 2002 – and the Land Reform Bill that

passed the Scottish Parliament in January 2003. These were issues with which senior Tory Party strategists did not want their campaign to become linked because they risked rendering them 'out of touch' with the concerns of non-Tory voters by clearly identifying local Conservatives with a rural elite. That Lt Col Charteris continued to write about these divisive issues meant that anti-Tory activists could easily portray him – and by association, his Conservative Party colleagues – as a 'throwback' to a discredited (rural) past that served to distance them from local people in both time and space (cf. Fabian 1983). For instance, the SNP candidate for the Dumfries constituency Andrew Wood asked in his own letter to *The Standard* on 18 December 2002 whether Lt Col Charteris claimed to speak for other Conservatives:

'...John Charteris was the Tory candidate at the last general election and what would David Mundell have been saying, had Mr Charteris been elected. Fortunately the electorate had the good sense in rejecting such a candidate. Truly, this person must have been held in high esteem within the Conservative association, to have been allowed to stand in the first place, and one begs the question of their selection process, or the quality of candidates that they are putting forward into Dumfries.' (*The Standard*, 18 December 2002)

By making such associations between Conservative Party activists and their maverick supporters, anti-Tory activists attempted to draw David Mundell and other local Conservatives into issues such as the fire fighters' strike and the Iraq war. However, senior Conservative Party strategists strongly resisted such entanglements primarily because these issues were, in their view, 'difficult' for the local Labour Party. Many political activists believed that the local Labour Party's traditional supporters were probably uncomfortable with the idea that their Government might oppose striking fire fighters or commit troops to a US-led invasion of Iraq. Relishing the discomfort of their

political opponents, several Conservative Party activists declared that the Labour Party was in ‘unknown territory’ on these issues. As one MSP put it – perhaps a little optimistically:

‘When the Conservatives were in power, the Scottish Labour Party got complacent, knowing they always had public opinion behind them. Now they don’t have the public on side – and they don’t know how to deal with this new situation.’

Key Conservative Party strategists worried that – if drawn by the likes of Lt Col Charteris into debates over the Iraq war, for instance – they could become entangled with the local Labour Party in political territory that otherwise refused to settle (cf. Jean-Klein 2002:44). Their concerns about John Charteris increased when an article appeared in the national daily newspaper the *Glasgow Herald* on 4 November 2002 entitled ‘Pro-hunt protestors to challenge for MSPs seats’. Here, Lt Col Charteris was reportedly ‘connected’ to a new political Party working ‘for the promotion of rural matters’ that was considering targeting constituencies in the upcoming Scottish Parliament elections in which the local MSP had voted for the foxhunting ban. Such comments alarmed local Conservative Party strategists because one such seat included the Dumfries constituency, where local Tories feared their campaign could suffer if residents of both Town and Country became polarised over issues like foxhunting.

Some members of the Core Campaign Team therefore spent a lot of time trying to discourage Lt Col Charteris and dampen his enthusiasm for writing to local newspapers. It was generally agreed that he needed to be carefully ‘managed’ as the best chance local Conservatives had of controlling his behaviour lay in keeping him within the Party’s rank

and file. In other words, some political activists argued that if he was expelled from the local Conservative Party – a course of action that was discussed on several occasions – he could inflict even more damage because he would be able to write freely to local newspapers on any issue that attracted his interest, while local people would continue to associate him with them.

Several strategies were deployed to address the problems Lt Col Charteris ‘caused’. The least effective appeared to be a series of stern letters he received from the Edinburgh-based Chairman of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party. However, he maintained an interest in standing for local Council. Given the local Tories’ determination to nominate a candidate for every Ward across Dumfries and Galloway, his interest was therefore encouraged because – should he decide to run – he would have to appoint one of the Conservative Party’s local Election Agents as his legal representative during the campaign. In such a position, that Election Agent would be legally responsible for his campaign and could therefore vet all of his election comment and material – including letters to the editor. After much wrangling, Lt Col Charteris agreed to stand as the Scottish Conservative candidate for a Council Ward in Northeast Dumfries.

Of course, the difficulties of managing this strong personality persisted, consuming time, energy and office resources during the first few months of 2003. On one occasion, one senior Conservative Party activist asked an influential member of the County Set to rein in Lt Col Charteris. After all:

‘John Charteris may not be particularly bothered about [our] chances of getting elected in Dumfries, but he will care very much if he is alienated by his County Set mates and they no longer invite him to their parties.’

On 21 March 2003 – after weeks of bluff and counter-bluff between the retired Lieutenant Colonel and various other political activists – a story appeared on the front page of the *Courier* entitled ‘War Demo Clash’ (Figure 10). According to this story, Lt Col Charteris had turned up to a small anti-war protest organised by the local branch of the Scottish Socialist Party and to which the SNP candidate for Dumfries also attended; a photograph of the opinionated Tory arguing with an anti-war demonstrator was published with the story. The following day, a large meeting of local Conservative Party activists voiced anger at what they considered to be Lt Col Charteris’ inability to work as a member of a team. One political activist declared that he had ‘gone too far’ while another quipped bitterly:

‘All he has succeeded in doing is getting a photograph of the local SNP onto the front page of the *Courier*.’

As if anticipating the negative reaction of other political activists, Lt Col Charteris did not attend this meeting despite accepting an invitation to do so. In fact – perhaps to the relief of key Conservative Party strategists – he did not re-surface again until after the dust had settled following Polling Day.

I have ended this chapter with this story because it reveals a final irony about the ‘lesser-spotted’ Tory. The challenge of ‘silencing’ Lt Col Charteris presented local Conservative Party strategists with a paradox given their anxiety about being ‘absent’ from – and potentially irrelevant to – local and national politics in Scotland. Many in the

Core Campaign Team viewed an outspoken political activist like Lt Col Charteris as an obstacle to building a successful campaign and ‘catching up’ with the local Labour Party because, from their perspective, he would not subject himself to the discipline the Campaign Plan demanded. Furthermore, what is especially ironic is that many of the issues about which he wrote so passionately – foxhunting, the countryside, land reform, the fire fighters’ strike and the Iraq war – were probably ‘relevant’ to traditional Conservative supporters insofar as they may have agreed with Lt Col Charteris’ views. However, key Conservative Party strategists believed there was a mismatch here between the priorities of their traditional supporters and those of the voters they were seeking to win ‘back’, many of whom were thought lived in Towns. For the Campaign Plan to succeed, some Conservative Party activists had to work hard to silence the voices of some of their colleagues, in turn making themselves less relevant, so to speak – or, potentially, irrelevant – to the concerns of their most committed supporters. Once Lt Col Charteris and others like him had been rendered absent from local political debate, the Campaign Plan could be put to work. Following Riles (2003b), I will now turn to four ‘instruments’ that Conservative Party activists considered vital in their discursive armoury: the survey, the press release, the leaflet and the target letter.

Chapter Six

Making (a) difference

Banal activism and the emergence of form

In this chapter, I return to my earlier discussion of the hybrid nature of knowledge and social relations (cf. Edwards 2000) as I consider four discursive ‘instruments’ (cf. Riles 2001, 2003b) that Conservative Party activists considered vital to their campaign: the survey, the press release, the leaflet and the target letter. I argue that addressing logistical and organisational questions – that is, activist methodology – in the production of these instruments in many ways mattered more to political activists than the ‘issues’ on which they intended to campaign. Indeed, local ‘issues’ better resembled intellectual ‘puzzles’ in a Kuhn-inspired sense (1962, 1977); they were ‘found’ or ‘produced’ as artefacts or contrivances of activist labour and were primarily concerned with demonstrating ‘relevance’ and the ability to ‘make (a) difference’ to ‘local people’. Furthermore, persuasive force was thought to reside in the aesthetic(s) and the form(s) of these various instruments – that is, in the way they ‘looked’ – which political activists hoped would become obvious to local people through the sheer scale of their production and distribution throughout Dumfries and Galloway¹²⁶.

During the campaign, I came to think of these instruments as discursive artefacts produced through a kind of *banal activism*. The banality of local Conservative Party activism was highlighted when key strategists attempted to obviate national issues – such as the Iraq war, the fire fighters’ strike, foxhunting or land reform – so that emphasis

could be placed on local issues. However, the local issues on which the Core Campaign Team organised the local Tories' campaign were usually framed as questions of 'common sense' versus 'Council incompetence' (cf. Edwards 2000:200). I often felt that this resonated with the bureaucratic way in which the Core Campaign Team had sought to address the local Conservatives' crisis in (electoral) representation. Political activists hoped that organising a professional-looking campaign (cf. Jean-Klein 2002) around local issues focused on rendering Council administration more efficient and accountable – by 'freezing' Council Tax, for instance (see below) – would persuade local voters to view local Tories as both responsible and responsive. Even the ways in which political activists argued that they were 'relevant' and able to 'make (a) difference' often pursued a bureaucratic logic, as should become clear below.

It is important to note, though, that if these instruments seemed banal to me, they were considered 'new' and 'vital' to Conservative Party activists. Given that key Tory Party strategists believed they had 'fallen behind' the local Labour Party and needed to new campaign strategies and tactics in order to 'catch up', this is not surprising. What is significant here is to acknowledge that local Conservatives were often compelled to improvise in their political activism (cf. Levine 2004). Following the obliteration of the Scottish Tories at the 1997 General Election, Scottish Conservative Central Office failed to exert much authority over a political Party that had been reduced to fragments. Local Conservative Party activists were sometimes concerned that Central Office was not in a position to provide them with assistance but, more often, they were relieved that 'national' Tories were unable to 'interfere' with their campaign in Dumfries and

¹²⁶ By the end of the Conservative Party campaign, for instance, senior Tories estimated that several hundred thousand leaflets had been distributed throughout the region.

Galloway. This left them to borrow ideas from a wide array of sources, particularly the local Labour Party, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and fellow Conservative Party activists in South Ayrshire¹²⁷.

In addition, an important assumption informed the production of Conservative Party leaflets and other instruments: local people were not interested in what the local Tories had to say. Believing that much of their 'target' audience remained disinterested in political issues, key Conservative Party strategists placed emphasis on questions of form over expectations of a 'critical' reading (cf. Agger 1989; 2005) from the recipients of their 'literature'. Through the repetition of language and the reproduction of recognisable forms (cf. Riles 2001), the instruments with which the local Conservative Party fought its campaign would register some form of recognition in the minds of disinterested potential voters. As Edwards (2000:69) might put it, such forms constituted 'visual reminders' capable of triggering 'connections' in the minds of 'readers' who might otherwise just glance at these instruments in passing. It could be said that what Conservative Party activists hoped to achieve through the production of these instruments was a dawning effect (cf. Wittgenstein, in Brand 1979) whereby local people might come to apprehend (see) the lesser spotted Tory despite their alleged resistance to Politics 'with a Big P'. I will now survey what will inevitably amount to a small sample of these instruments but it should be noted that the material on which I primarily draw related to

¹²⁷ Local Conservatives attempted to 'copy' many local Labour Party themes in their leaflets, which is probably not very surprising. Meanwhile, one political activist picked up a Liberal Democrat leaflet from a relative's house in Balerno, which inspired the so-called 'hand written' target letter earmarked on the Campaign Plan for key Council Wards. Finally, the local Conservative Party in South Ayrshire was widely considered the only Association that had retained some semblance of political organisation and campaigning professionalism following the 1997 'wipe out'. The ways in which the Core Campaign Team organised – many members of

the local Conservative Party's campaign for the local Council elections. This makes sense given that this campaign was often treated as a source of 'building blocks' for the Scottish Parliament campaign. I then conclude this chapter with a few ethnographic observations about the ways their production and distribution helped generate a sense of prospective momentum for local Conservatives desperate to stay (ir-) relevant and make (a) difference.

The Survey

One important role the Core Campaign Team performed was to bring together various kinds of 'intelligence' in order to develop a comprehensive picture of what local issues mattered most to which local communities. Some of this discussion would take place under the agenda items 'Council and Candidates' as well as 'Media and Message' but it was also more wide-ranging. Information gathering involved a diverse set of practices. At its simplest, it included the sharing of conversations and impressions that political activists had gleaned during the previous days or week campaigning. One member of staff was considered a particularly useful source of local information given her extensive contact with a wide variety of local networks¹²⁸. In addition, there were some networks and 'interests' about which key Conservative Party strategists believed they needed to know more. On one occasion, for instance, a Tory MSP complained 'I don't have a feel for the issues' that concerned local NHS employees, who numbered several thousand in

which had close links to Ayr – were therefore influenced greatly by the political activities of South Ayrshire Tories.

¹²⁸ One of her more interesting 'connections' at that time included her (then) boyfriend, who was General Secretary of the local branch of the FBU and a member of the Scottish Socialist Party.

Dumfries and Galloway and therefore constituted an important potential 'target' audience.

The first instrument I analyse, then, was vital to local Conservatives' attempts to gather 'intelligence': the survey. By January 2003, several surveys had already been distributed throughout the region and several more had been planned in the months before Polling Day. The survey I describe here was organised by David Mundell MSP and scheduled for posting in February 2003; responses could be submitted via a Freepost envelope enclosed with it¹²⁹. Entitled 'Local Opinion Survey' (Figure 10), the questions on local issues remained much the same as those from previous surveys. However, two aspects of this questionnaire make it particularly interesting. Firstly, this survey of 'local opinion' is different to, say, a Government census (cf. Cohn 1987, 1996) or the kinds of surveys one might encounter in the social sciences. This point was not understood by one of my non-political informants, who received the survey in the post and complained to me that it was not 'objective'. After all, this individual explained, the survey was attached to the back of a covering letter in which the respondent was identified, which meant that the results were not anonymous and could not be collated to produce 'robust' statistics.

This survey was not meant to produce an objective view of 'local opinion', however; it was designed to identify Conservative Party voters in Dumfriesshire. This was made possible by naming the respondent(s) in the covering letter and then asking

¹²⁹ This meant that surveys were being sent back to the local Conservative Party office during March and even April 2003. In itself, inputting data from these responses proved extremely time-consuming for political activists.

them for their voting intention at the end of the survey¹³⁰. Thousands of these surveys were returned during March 2003, enabling political activists to add the names of hundreds of previously unknown voters to their lists of ‘pledged’ support. This support would be targeted later through a series of ‘get out the vote’ letters as well as the telephone ‘knock up’ (see Chapter Seven). In some ways, this survey was the most ‘instrumental’ of the discursive artefacts deployed during the campaign, in terms of the information it solicited and the ends to which that information would be later put.

Secondly, the covering letter from David Mundell MSP on the front of this survey is also of interest. Sub-titled ‘2003 Scottish Parliament and Council Elections’, Mr Mundell outlines the issues on which his Tory colleagues in the Scottish Parliament had been campaigning:

‘From our previous surveys we know many people are concerned about the priorities of the new Scottish Parliament. Local people are particularly concerned about the Central Belt bias of the Parliament and the lack of attention it pays to rural areas like Dumfries and Galloway. Conservatives in the Scottish Parliament have consistently spoken out on important local issues such as jobs, the future of Chapelcross, the state of local roads, the difficulty in recruiting medical staff and dentists to the area, farming after Foot and Mouth Disease, and [the] future of services in rural areas more generally. However, we would appreciate hearing your views on the issues that you believe are the most important to you and your family.’

Reminding survey recipients of their previous ‘contact’ with local Conservatives, David Mundell foregrounds their desire to ‘hear’ the views of local people. At the same time as

¹³⁰ Furthermore, dozens of Opposition activists completed the survey and sent it back in the Freepost envelope – but only after tearing their names and addresses from the top of the form. This would waste Conservative Party money and time. However, most would not notice a number printed in the bottom, right hand corner – by David Mundell’s signature – which was an individual’s electoral registration number. This allowed such forms to be identified later on the Conservative Party’s database.

asserting their willingness to listen to local opinion, however, he is already generating political claims. In the next paragraph, he writes:

‘Our feedback is that local people are also very disappointed by the performance of the current Council Administration. The Conservative Group is the Opposition on this Council and is well placed to lead the Council after this year’s elections. The Conservative Group’s aim is to deliver quality services, while keeping Council tax under control. Instead the Rainbow Alliance of Labour, SNP, Liberal Democrats and Independents that control the current Council Administration are getting involved in the disastrous projects such as the nonsensical school closure programme. Again your thoughts on the Council issues most important to you would be greatly appreciated.’

Before the survey recipient turns over to read the questions on the back of the letter, Conservative Party activists were already trying to set a policy agenda on local issues. However, the most important point to observe here is the claim that the Conservative Councillors constituted the only Opposition to a ‘Rainbow Alliance’ Council Administration. This claim was considered necessary to highlight because one of the frustrations of the Core Campaign Team was that, in their view, local people did not fully appreciate that Tory Councillors were ‘different’ from their opponents on Dumfries and Galloway Council. This problem was largely blamed on Conservative Councillors themselves, who had allegedly been reluctant to promote themselves as ‘the Opposition’ to the Council Administration¹³¹. However, it also revealed a concern that was to be articulated much more starkly, later in the campaign: Tory voters might not vote Conservative in the local Council elections. After all, their ‘loyalties’ may have been ‘divided’ between local Conservatives and other candidates with whom they may be connected through the many associations to which – as I argued in Chapter Four –

political activists and others belong in small, rural communities (cf. Cohen 1982, Lovell 1998).

The Press Release

In Chapter Three, I suggested that local newspapers were a vital medium for political activists in Dumfries and Galloway. However, ‘feeding’ local newspapers was a very time-consuming and labour-intensive exercise for Conservative Party activists¹³². The Scottish Conservative candidate for the Dumfries constituency in the 2003 Scottish Parliament election – David Mundell – had built a strong profile for his candidature in local newspapers, but keeping up with them – ‘maintaining the pace’ – proved exhausting. In addition to taking an interest in the letters’ pages of local newspapers, the Core Campaign Team agreed to run a focused media strategy in order to raise the profile of the Conservative Councillors as an Opposition Group to the ‘Rainbow Alliance’ Administration. Under the agenda item ‘Media and Message’, two local issues would be identified each week as the subject(s) of at least two press releases to be distributed on behalf of the Tory Councillors. Sometimes, local issues would run over several weeks and become a campaign ‘theme’¹³³.

Although the task of faxing the same press release – albeit finessed for specific communities – to almost a dozen local newspapers every week was very challenging,

¹³¹ Some attributed this reluctance to the ‘shell shocked’ reaction of local Tory Councillors, when they had been frozen out of negotiations to form a Council Administration after the last election.

¹³² Because local Conservatives could plausibly hope to win either of the two Parliamentary constituencies within Dumfries and Galloway, they needed to maintain an interest in all local newspapers across the region. No other political Party was presented with this same challenge.

¹³³ Most local newspapers were published towards the end of the week. Therefore, the writing of press releases and other related practices tended to proceed at a frenetic pace on Mondays and Tuesdays so that local Conservatives could meet the deadlines of the region’s newspapers.

‘running’ their media strategy in such a methodical way generated considerable success for local Conservatives. This was reflected in the number of stories that were reproduced by local journalists virtually verbatim; when this happened, local Conservative Party activists were particularly pleased. Such occurrences increased in regularity when local Tories emailed their press releases. In late February 2003, their efforts paid off spectacularly when the Newton Stewart-based *Galloway Gazette* simply cut and paste several of their press releases into an edition of their newspaper¹³⁴.

One such campaign ‘theme’ emerged during the early weeks of 2003 as Dumfries and Galloway Council worked towards setting new rates of Council Tax for the 2003-2004 financial year. In anticipation of a decision – which would be made in the first couple of weeks of February – Conservative Party activists campaigned against proposals to increase Council Tax by a rate higher than inflation. As a result, the Conservative Council Group committed to ‘freezing’ Council Tax ‘at the rate of inflation’ – a policy commitment that was presented as a major ‘point of difference’ (cf. Riles 2001) with the ‘Rainbow Alliance’ Administration in a series of press releases to local newspapers and other media outlets¹³⁵.

The sample press release I discuss here is typical of the dozens local Conservatives issued before Polling Day. Entitled ‘Tories Claim Victory on Council Tax’ (Figure 11), the header and the footer had been hastily re-designed (improvised) in January 2003 to provide a number of visual clues to newspaper reporters to how the Tory

¹³⁴ The content of press releases was regularly reproduced as letters to the editor and also on the back of Conservative Party leaflets (see Figure 12).

¹³⁵ This policy stance was a compromise. Some key Conservative Party strategists wanted to simply freeze Council Tax in order to highlight this ‘point of difference’ with the ‘Rainbow Alliance’ Administration. However, senior Councillors thought this would be ‘imprudent’ and potentially put the Council’s finances at risk.

Councillors should be presented in their reporting. The most notable of these clues were those that highlighted difference: the first line of the header declaring the press release had been authored by the Conservative Opposition on Dumfries and Galloway Council. This was augmented by the slogan at the bottom asserting that it was 'Time for a Change'. Furthermore, the text of the press release placed emphasis on the 'consistency' of the local Conservative Party's position on Council Tax before highlighting in bold the local Party's commitment to 'freeze Council Tax at current levels.' These points served to further differentiate local Tories from the 'Rainbow Alliance' Administration, which Conservative Party strategists sought to present as 'chaotic', 'cynical' and 'incoherent'.

All of these points sought to underscore a sense that local Conservatives presented a rational, 'common sense' alternative to the Council Administration. I am reminded here of the work of the political philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1962) who might suggest that the press release presented here invokes 'the authority of reason':

'Rational' activity is activity in search of a certain, a conclusive answer to a question, and consequently the question must be formulated in such a way that it admits of such an answer.' (Oakeshott 1962:83-84)

Certainly, according to this press release, it would seem that the 'problem' – defeating 'inflation-busting' Council Tax 'hikes' – is given an early 'focus'. This is the first step to formulating a problem in such a way as to be 'solvable' through 'rational' (consistent) intervention. As a result, local Tories were able to claim 'victory' on Council Tax:

'There can be no doubt that our early commitment to freeze Council Tax at the rate of inflation forced the Administration to think again ... [The] only reason why some semblance of common sense has prevailed on this occasion is because

the Administration has caved into the arguments that the Conservatives have been making now for weeks. Only the Conservatives have been consistent on this issue.'

In the light of these observations, it could also be argued that political activists' usage of 'issue' is analogous to Kuhn's idea of a scientific 'puzzle' (1962, 1977). For Kuhn, 'an assured solution' exists to puzzles, which is achieved through the careful application of 'rules that limit both the nature of acceptable solutions and the steps by which they are to be obtained' (1962:38). From this perspective, the challenge of issues/puzzles 'lies less in the information disclosed by their solutions ... than in the difficulties ... to be surmounted in providing any solution at all' (1977:235). Whether or not local Tories could plausibly claim victory on Council Tax matters less, then, than how their claim is framed in order to 'achieve' such a victory.

Some might argue that appeals to 'common sense' (cf. Edwards 2000:200) resonate with broader ideas that Scots see themselves as more practical and community-oriented than the English, who are sometimes viewed as possessing more conservative and individualistic political values (Lindsay 1997:145; cf. Hearn 1997, 1998)¹³⁶. That Scottish Conservatives sought to frame their political claims in such terms might therefore be regarded as a counter-intuitive move on their behalf. This is not really an argument with which I agree, as the kinds of egalitarian political values that are thought to underpin such ideas are not necessarily unique to Scotland¹³⁷. Meanwhile, other

¹³⁶ Interestingly, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once criticised the pro-welfare lobby of Scotland for being in support of a 'dependency culture' and 'nanny state'. As such, she accused Scots of being ignorant of their own intellectual heritage, represented in her view by Adam Smith and other supporters of free trade from the Scottish Enlightenment (Hearn 2000:123).

¹³⁷ For example, Kapferer (1988) and Lattas (1990) have made similar arguments about egalitarian nationalist ideology in Australia.

scholars (e.g. Herzfeld 1992, Gupta 1995) have observed that discourses of public accountability in a variety of liberal democratic settings find forceful expression through a complementary concern with – and allegations of – corruption or incompetence within state agencies. However, I want to suggest here that arguing for a rational, common sense approach to local Government might itself constitute an indispensable, aesthetic feature of a modern, professional campaign (cf. Jean-Klein 2002, Riles 2001). So that the lesser-spotted Tory could be ‘seen’ as a plausible alternative to the Rainbow Alliance Administration, local Conservative Party strategists believed they needed to foreground values like ‘listening’ to local people – as in the example of the survey – and championing ‘common sense’.

The Leaflet

The most important instrument in the Conservative Party’s discursive armoury was a leaflet called *In Touch* (Figures 12 and 13). Tens of thousands of these were distributed across Dumfries and Galloway over several months before the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections. It was in relation to the production of this leaflet that I suggest questions of form (cf. Lepinay 2004, Riles 2001) emerged as a central, aesthetic concern for political activists.

The *In Touch* leaflet was the main vehicle for promoting local candidates in specific communities across the region. A particularly useful tool for Tory candidates in small, rural Council Wards, Figure 12 is a good example of an introductory *In Touch* – a glossy, A4 sized leaflet that was professionally printed through a local firm. Here, the successful Conservative candidate for the Moffat Ward Safa Ash-Kuri – who was

selected late into the campaign, just a few weeks before Polling Day itself – is photographed shaking hands with the Scottish Conservative MSP David Mundell. The lead story on the leaflet is devoted to an important local issue – in this case, uncertainty surrounding the future of the local school. However, a small text box at the bottom of the first page detailed biographical information about the candidate, including the fact that he lives in Moffat with his wife and is ‘looking forward’ to the birth of their first grandchild:

‘Safa is active in many local organisations including the Wildlife Club, Probus, the Badminton Club, Golf Club and is a member of the Parish Council of St Luke’s Church. He is a keen computer user and is campaigning to bring broadband to Moffat.’

This information resembles the potted (auto) biographies with which political activists introduced themselves at the Boundary Commission public inquiry discussed in Chapter Four. Perhaps this is not very surprising. I suggest that the very name of this leaflet – *In Touch* – attempts to make the connection between the candidate and the community a literal one (cf. Edwards 2000, Strathern 1991, 1992, 1996). As an instrument, a leaflet like this one is designed to mediate (link) a person with a place – and then to connect this up *with a political Party*. In the case of the local Conservatives, this ‘connecting up’ was considered vital as a means of grounding a political Party that many had thought ‘lost touch’ socially and materially. The desirability of making connections (cf. Strathern and Edwards 1999:152) is made explicit here, as is uniqueness (cf. Edwards 2000:248), which is located in the relationship between an individual (the candidate) and his or her locality (the Council Ward)¹³⁸.

¹³⁸ The point I am making here is different to the argument made by Hanks (1989, 1990, 1996), who believes ‘for anthropology the dimension of power in and of texts is of prime importance,

The strength of this leaflet lay in its potential to be crafted for a specific audience – defined by these examples as a Council Ward. Given their strategy of nominating a Tory candidate for all 47 Wards in Dumfries and Galloway, the need to make each, individual leaflet ‘distinctive’ in order to target them effectively to specific local communities became extremely burdensome on local Conservatives and their limited technology. While dealing with the logistical problems of trying to produce so many (different) leaflets, questions of form emerged as a way of addressing a situation that – like John Charteris – required careful ‘management’ if it was not to become a ‘crisis’¹³⁹. Form became a means of ‘tunnelling’ vision (cf. Scott 1998:11). In contrast to the themes of connectivity and distinctiveness highlighted in the introductory *In Touch*, then, the second *In Touch* opted to foreground the partisan case for ‘voting Conservative’ across the entire region.

The second *In Touch* (Figure 13) – mass produced in blue and black on a riso-graph in the local Conservative Party office – sought to resolve these logistical issues¹⁴⁰. Retaining the name and the ‘swoosh’ from the original *In Touch*, the leaflet was

linking up the textual formation, as it does, with social relations and a larger cultural system’ (1989:102).

¹³⁹ The frenetic organisation of Conservative Party activists reminds me again of Hunter S. Thompson: ‘From December ’71 to January ’73 – in airport bars, all-nite coffee shops and dreary hotel rooms all over the country – there is hardly a paragraph in this jangled saga that wasn’t produced in a last-minute, teeth-grinding frenzy. There was never enough time. Every deadline was a crisis.’ (Thompson 1994:12)

¹⁴⁰ Two weeks before Polling Day, however, the riso-graph broke down. With literally thousands of leaflets left to produce, this was a crisis for local Conservatives that could not easily be addressed. In search of a ‘new’ riso-graph, they contacted the Tory office in Ayr (where the machine was in continuous use) and Scottish Conservative Central Office in Edinburgh. When it had been established that theirs was free, Alan M. drove up to Edinburgh and spent several nights printing off the remaining leaflets. After he returned, I asked other members of the Core Campaign Team if there was a riso-graph in Carlisle that they could have used. No one had thought about asking Tories in England for help; after telephoning them, they discovered that the Carlisle Conservatives did, in fact, possess a riso-graph in good working order, which they invited Dumfries-based Conservatives to use ‘whenever they needed it’.

recognisably the product of local Conservative Party activists. Meanwhile, in a lead story entitled 'The only way to change the Council is to vote Conservative!' readers were exhorted to support local Tory candidates if they wanted to end the 'nonsense' of the 'Rainbow Alliance' Administration:

'...Dumfries and Galloway Council is currently run by a Rainbow Alliance Administration comprising Labour, Liberal Democrat, SNP and so-called 'Independent' councillors, who act as a group to keep themselves in power. The Conservative Opposition has been the only group of councillors to speak out for local people against crazy Council schemes and inflation busting Council Tax hikes. Local Conservatives understand the mood for change... We believe that every single person should have the opportunity to make a difference by voting for our positive agenda for change. That is why we have selected candidates to contest all 47 council wards across Dumfries and Galloway.

By now the unofficial slogan of the Conservative Party's campaign for the local Council elections, 'Change the Council – Vote Conservative' was repeated several more times throughout this *In Touch*. Furthermore, a story appeared on the back that portrayed the upcoming local Council election as a 'referendum' on the 'Rainbow Alliance' Administration¹⁴¹.

Casting an eye over the two *In Touches* taken together perhaps tells the analyst something useful about the kinds of relations Conservative Party activists were trying to forge and/or harness in the run-up to Polling Day. What seems to be at work here are two ways of linking material that are perhaps not unlike the practices of purification and translation that Bruno Latour (1993:10-11) believes lie at the heart of the 'modern critical

¹⁴¹ The (then) Deputy Leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Annabel Goldie launched this referendum in a mini-campaign on 14 April 2003. In a press release, local Conservatives announced that Ms Goldie would visit a number of 'hot spots' that had become 'symbolic' of the Council's 'record of failure': 'In so doing, she will be highlighting that by

stance'. The one in which local Tories argue against the Council Administration in very partisan terms – purification – potentially resembles the political pantomime that I discussed when describing Wittgenstein's language games in Chapter Three. The other whereby Tory Party leaflets 'connect up' persons, places and political Parties – translation – seems to share characteristics with the hybrid knowledge practices explored in Chapter Four. Indeed, these leaflets can be apprehended as if through a bifocal lens (cf. Peters 1997) so that one set of connections is brought to the foreground at the expense of the other; it is the movement between these two moments of 'seeing' that becomes instrumental (Edwards 2000:248).

The 'Target' Letter

In order to 'get out the vote' (GOTV) and maintain momentum on Polling Day, the local Conservative Party produced several 'target' letters, most of which were posted to their pledged and possible supporters during the last week of the campaign. Some of these, however, came out much earlier. In February 2003, a letter was enclosed with postal vote application forms to those electors who had already pledged support to the local Conservative Party. In that letter, the popular retired Tory MP Lord Monro argued that Conservatives needed to vote in the Scottish Parliament elections:

'I voted No-No in 1997 and have seen nothing to change my mind. However the Parliament is not going to go away and the only way to change it is to have more Conservatives in it. The only way to do that is to vote Conservative in next year's elections. Not voting will simply allow more Labour, Liberal and SNP members to be elected with their left-wing anti-rural agenda. We will just get much more

voting Tory on 1st May, local people across Dumfries and Galloway will have the opportunity to send a clear message by rejecting this Council Administration's incompetence.'

of what we have seen over the past three and a half years. I urge all local Conservatives to ensure they vote.'

This message was targeted repeatedly to local Conservatives, whom key Tory Party strategists believed might be reluctant to vote in an election for an institution that most of them had opposed. But by April 2003, most senior Conservative Party activists felt that their supporters had listened to – and accepted – this message¹⁴². The emphasis, then, switched to encouraging Tory voters to support Conservative candidates in the local Council elections.

Several target letters were distributed to Conservatives in the Moffat Ward, including one from David Mundell MSP encouraging them to support Safa Ash-Kuri. A simple, typewritten letter on yellow paper, it was designed to look 'more personal' and 'different' to the many leaflets that local Conservative Party activists had distributed during their campaign. To further highlight this sense of difference, Mr Mundell used his residential address in the top right-hand corner of the letter rather than make it look like an 'official' piece of Conservative Party correspondence. He began his letter by talking about Safa Ash-Kuri's 'solid experience in business' and described the local Conservative Party as being 'very fortunate' to have found a candidate with 'the expertise and the common sense' that the Council 'clearly lacks'. He then reminded local supporters that 'only the Conservatives' remain committed to saving local schools and

¹⁴² According to one Tory MSP, there were a number of signs that local Conservatives had reconciled themselves to the existence of the Scottish Parliament. The most encouraging of these was the large numbers of enthusiastic volunteers from the Dumfries Ladies Lunch Club, who had willingly come into the office and helped with the stuffing and sorting of thousands of leaflets for the local Conservative Party campaign. Unsure whether those who had opposed devolution would assist in the election, this candidate told me that he had been 'genuinely touched' by their support.

‘stopping the spiralling Council Tax bills’. But the letter is written with a specific ‘threat’ in mind – that being posed by the ‘Independent’ councillor:

‘... [It] is particularly important that Conservative supporters vote Conservative in the Council elections. Our local ‘Independent’ Councillor voted against Conservative proposals that would have kept Beattock Primary open and guaranteed Moffat Academy’s future as an all-through school. Independent Councillors claim to be non political yet they have formed themselves into a party group on the Council and vote together as a party in coalition with Labour and the SNP. Accordingly, I can assure you that voting Independent is not the equivalent of voting Conservative. If you want both an excellent local Councillor, well qualified to fight for the needs of our communities and to change the Council, vote Conservative, vote for Safa Ash-Kuri in the Council elections on 1st May.’

This letter sought to directly address a tactical problem with which local Conservative Party strategists thought they were confronted. As I noted in Chapter One, the history of local Government in a rural area like Dumfries and Galloway has tended to be dominated by the presence of ‘non-aligned’ Councillors, who used to be referred to as ‘Colonels’ juntas’. In contemporary local politics, the Independent Councillor posed Tory Party strategists a real conundrum for the simple fact that many of their supporters believed they were closet Tories. Therefore, local Conservative Party activists worked hard to persuade many of their supporters not to vote Independent in the local Council elections. As one political activist declared after a heated meeting with a couple of Tory Councillors, ‘we are trying to change the political culture’ of Dumfries and Galloway by convincing local Tories to vote for Conservative Councillors.

Furthermore, some local Conservatives worried that following the 1997 General Election, the Tory ‘brand’ had become so irrevocably poisoned in Scotland. As a result, some candidates wanted to play down their Tory connections in their campaign leaflets,

which alarmed key Conservative Party strategists trying to minimise the threat posed by Independent candidates. After all, they felt that this kind of timidity from Tory Party activists would only serve to legitimise the case for supporting non-aligned candidates in local Council elections. Therefore, the target letter described here worked along the same lines as the *In Touches* described above; they sought to connect up persons and places with a political Party in order to persuade local supporters to ‘pull rank’ and vote Conservative.

One question with which Conservative Party activists struggled was whether any of these instruments made a difference to the way people intended to vote on Polling Day (see Chapter Seven)? There was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that the instruments outlined here – the survey, the press release, the leaflet and the target letter – did make some kind of difference. However, the point to highlight is that Conservative Party activists functioned on the assumption that all of these instruments (and more) would generate social effects (cf. Riles 2001). The work of preparing, producing and distributing these discursive artefacts therefore dominated the time, energy and resources of local Conservative Party activists.

Making (a) difference and the emergence of form

Riles (1998:394, 2001) has argued that complexity can most clearly be brought ‘into a single encompassing view’ through the imposition of form on a text. Institutions produce texts in which language adheres ‘to a predetermined format ... borrowed from other documents while producing its own variations on the standard form’ (Riles 1998:381);

the objective can often become one of satisfying ‘the aesthetics of logic and language’ rather than achieving ‘transparent meaning’:

‘The work of producing properly patterned language was ... a sorting exercise in which language [is] cut, arranged, or inserted to produce appropriate strings of words. The final result [is] a ‘clean’ text...’ (Riles 1998:386)

The repetition of language – ‘the extent to which the words [resonate] through the document as a whole’ – plays a central role in the construction of a ‘clean’ text. But repetition is also a question of aesthetic judgement: ‘the text should be ‘strong’ and ‘consistent’ but not ‘redundant’’. One has to acquire ‘an ear and an eye’ for these patterns (Riles 1998:387, 2001). I suggest that in the discursive examples presented in this chapter, the emergence of form functioned as an organising, empowering principle for Conservative Party activists¹⁴³.

To the Core Campaign Team, the instruments sampled above produced ‘a good specimen of a particular genre’ (Riles 1998:381, 2001) when taken together: a modern, professional campaign. Once particular phrases and patterns of language had been perfected during the drafting of these materials, they ‘moved’ across these discursive instruments as if the words were following the forms of the documents. This language could be described as having become ‘impoverished’ (Bloch 1975:13) – emptied of representational content – but it nevertheless generated ‘a solid linguistic regime’ (Riles 1998:392, 2001) that also helped generate a sense of prospective momentum (cf. Miyazaki 2003, 2004). In addition, it bespoke rational resolution. The visual aesthetic of

¹⁴³ As Edwards and Strathern (1999:162) might say: ‘What is benign about ... networks is their narrative power, the way they empower the making of stories to which whole sets of otherwise disparate activities belong.’

these discursive instruments – including the Conservative Party ‘swoosh’, the bold colours, sub-headings and text boxes – complemented this effect.

Michael Jackson (1989:149) has argued that in times of crisis, the ‘instrumental possibilities’ of metaphor and language are realised and saying may well become *much more than doing*. However, I want to suggest a more subtle process was at work here. Aided by the emergence of form, key Conservative Party strategists hoped that certain themes from their campaign would resonate with even the most disinterested of voters. One of these themes was the need to ‘vote Conservative’ if one wanted to ‘make a difference’ and ‘change the Council’ but it was also hoped that other notions might also be cultivated. These included the idea that local Conservatives were *in touch* and responsive to (connected) local communities and the lesser spotted Tory was a plausible, common sense alternative to the Rainbow Alliance Administration. In the final section of this chapter, I relate three ethnographic anecdotes regarding the ways in which local Tories ‘read’ the strategies of other political activists as evidence of ‘professionalism’ or otherwise. Working between and across the discursive artefacts analysed in this chapter generated a powerful sense of prospective momentum for Conservative Party activists that produced a ‘new’ reading of the local Labour Party – from which some drew a surprising conclusion.

In the first week of April 2003, *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* described the Dumfries constituency as a potential four-way marginal seat. Basing their judgment on the results of the Scottish Parliament elections that took place in 1999, such a suggestion certainly

seemed at the time to be plausible – on paper¹⁴⁴. Indeed, key Conservative Party strategists believed that their chances of winning the Dumfries constituency partly depended on the ability of the local SNP and Liberal Democrats to mount strong challenges to siphon left-of-centre voters away from the local Labour Party incumbent. However, at that late stage in the campaign, the Liberal Democrats had only just selected a candidate while the apparently erratic behaviour of the local SNP candidate Andrew Wood had been a cause of some concern to Conservative Party activists for several months.

For instance, a story had appeared in the *Standard* on 31 January entitled ‘Safety struggle’ in which Mr Wood argued for the removal of a ‘dangerous’ roundabout in the small village of Dunscore. Ambiguously described as ‘the Prospective Scottish Parliamentary Candidate’, Mr Wood was instantly rebutted in the article by the local Tory Councillor Allan Wright. To local Conservative Party activists, the reasoning behind Mr Wood’s interest in this roundabout was unclear. They initially greeted his intervention with humour given that Dunscore – located about ten miles Northwest of Dumfries – was in the neighbouring Galloway and Upper Nithsdale constituency and was therefore not the Parliamentary seat that Mr Wood was contesting in the upcoming elections. Some political activists speculated that the incumbent MSP for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Alasdair Morgan would probably have been unimpressed by Mr Wood’s intervention since both men were SNP candidates.

¹⁴⁴ The Dumfries result was: Elaine Murray (Labour) – 14,101 votes (36.64%); David Mundell (Conservative) – 10,447 votes (27.15%); Stephen Norris (SNP) – 7,625 votes (19.81%); and Neil Wallace (Liberal Democrat) – 6,309 votes (16.39%). For more on this election, please see Hassan and Lynch (2001).

Following a discussion, the Core Campaign Team decided not to write a letter to the editor in response to the story because it was assumed that Labour Party activists would probably use the opportunity to write one themselves. A common view amongst key Conservative Party strategists was that the Labour Party considered their biggest weakness to lie in the potential for the SNP to poach votes from them. The local Labour Party was therefore thought to have a strong interest in discrediting the local SNP candidate at every opportunity. Furthermore, Conservative Party strategists were deeply reluctant to become embroiled in a dispute with the SNP and were regularly baffled when the Scottish Nationalists sought to initiate one – as Mr Wood had done in response to a letter from John Charteris about the fire fighters strike, as discussed in Chapter Five. Indeed, with the local FBU branch on strike and local opposition growing to a potential war with Iraq – two issues on which the Scottish Socialist Party candidate was building a strong profile in the local newspapers – there appeared to be some potential for the Scottish Nationalists to draw support away from the Labour Party and weaken their electoral base. Put simply, local Tory Party strategists believed that to succeed in defeating the Labour Party in Dumfries, the Scottish Conservatives and the SNP both had to make Labour their target – and not each other.

Throughout my fieldwork, I was conscious of discussions taking place between some Conservative Party activists and individuals in other political Parties. Sometimes these discussions would be channelled through local kin-based networks but senior Tories often enjoyed good relations with well-placed political activists in other groups as well. In Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, for example, I was aware of informal contact between a couple of Stranraer-based Labour Party councillors and the local Conservative MP. In

contrast, however, local Conservatives did not have much contact with the SNP in Dumfries; my own Scottish Nationalist contacts were much better than those of my Tory Party informants. When I spoke to a couple of SNP activists a couple of weeks after the above story was printed about Dunscore roundabout, I asked why they were not targeting the Labour Party more in their material and whether they intended to do so in the future. Despite the SNP leadership adopting a strident anti-war stance, I was told that the Iraq situation was an issue about which they had to be 'very careful' and that they did not want to get 'too personal' in their attacks on local Labour Members of Parliament.

On a previous occasion, I had spoken to a Parliamentary Researcher who worked for the incumbent SNP MSP in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale and who was probably, therefore, part of his Campaign Team. I had put to him that a view I had encountered amongst local Tories was that it was in their mutual interests to try and get the Labour Party out of the Dumfries constituency. If achieved through a Conservative Party victory, the SNP would then be provided with an opportunity to target left-wing voters in a Tory-held constituency. As a result, local debate would be polarised between Scotland's most ardent Unionist party and their obvious nemesis the Scottish Nationalists, who could treat Dumfries as a winnable constituency in the medium to long term.

I was just a little surprised when the SNP activist politely changed the subject. It was as if such a strategy had never occurred to him or could not be entertained for reasons that remained unspoken. Local Tories who were familiar with this reluctance to engage in what they saw as a 'professional' political strategy despaired at the Nationalists' lack of 'sophistication'. One Conservative Party candidate explained to me that if SNP voters were more 'sophisticated', then he could directly appeal to them for

their votes by explaining that it was 'in their interests to get Labour out of first-past-the-post constituencies'. While concurring with my observation that after eighteen years of unpopular Tory rule SNP voters were perhaps not ready to cast their votes tactically against the Labour Party, he nevertheless hoped that there might come a day when such a direct appeal for the support of Scottish Nationalists might be possible. Indeed, while canvassing local households just days before the election, he 'found' one SNP voter in Dumfries who said that she was voting for him to 'get Labour out'. This discovery prompted a very excited telephone call to me just to prove that there might be some potential in a long-term strategy of targeting Nationalist votes in the constituency.

Prior to Christmas 2002, the MP for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Peter Duncan was toying with the idea of encouraging anti-SNP Labour and Liberal Democrat voters to support the Scottish Conservatives in order to 'wipe Nationalism off the map of southwest Scotland' in the coming elections. Although there was some scepticism as to whether Labour supporters would actually vote Conservative to achieve this aim, local Tory Party activists generally approved of the idea. Around the same time, the Scottish Conservative candidate for this constituency Alex Fergusson MSP – who had run for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale at the previous Scottish Parliament elections – had been thinking about the SNP slogan from the 1992 General Election. Campaigning under the banner 'Scotland free in 1993!' they had mounted a vocal but ultimately unsuccessful campaign to defeat the (then) incumbent Conservative MP the Rt. Hon Ian Lang. While driving home one night, a new slogan suddenly occurred to him: to make Galloway and Upper Nithsdale 'SNP free in 2003!'

At least one key Conservative Party strategist disliked the pun while some other political activists thought it was too provocative. But Mr Fergusson was adamant that he wanted to use the phrase in his leaflets at a time when many political activists believed the SNP might be under-estimating the Tories' chances of winning the constituency. Many local Conservatives thought that the SNP was taking the election for granted. Although the incumbent SNP candidate was credited with an excellent 'press operation' in the local newspapers, he never acknowledged his opposition, which some political activists might have been read as an indication of how irrelevant the Scottish Conservatives had become in 'new' political landscape of post-devolution Scotland. Most local Conservative Party strategists saw this, instead, as a sign of complacency. Indeed, these observations were consistent with my own field notes of the Scottish Nationalists' campaign. Twenty-four hours before Polling Day, the Parliamentary Researcher mentioned above told me:

'It is one thing for the Tories to beat an unknown SNP candidate at the general election, but they would have to get really lucky to beat Alasdair Morgan.'

The Scottish Conservatives introduced their invitation to marginal voters to make Galloway and Upper Nithsdale 'SNP free in 2003' in the last month of the campaign so that the Scottish Nationalists would have little time in which to respond. Highlighting the ability for local Conservatives to work as a 'team' at both Holyrood and Westminster should they win the constituency, Mr Fergusson wrote:

'Peter Duncan has provided a strong voice to the people of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale in Westminster and it is now time to match that with equally strong

representation in Holyrood. Give me your support on 1st May and together we can make Galloway and Upper Nithsdale SNP free in 2003!’

These two closing sentences were repeated on much of the Conservative Party’s literature – in press releases, *In Touches* and other leaflets as well as target letters to supporters and other potential voters – during the final days and hours of the campaign. While local Tory Party strategists were unsure as to whether many people would be persuaded by this argument, they felt that at the very least mentioning Mr Duncan’s success at the 2001 General Election would be enough to galvanise Tory supporters to vote on Polling Day.

In the last week of April 2003, members of the Core Campaign Team were encouraged by anecdotal reports that some Labour Party activists were planning to vote Tory in order to ‘wipe Nationalism off the map of southwest Scotland’. With just days to go, the brother of one Labour Party councillor walked into the Wigtownshire office of the local Conservative MP and told a staff member there that for the first time in their lives he and others were telling their friends to vote Conservative to make the constituency ‘SNP free in 2003’ – a slogan that they apparently particularly appreciated.

In the last two weeks before Polling Day, the total amount of campaign material distributed in Dumfries from all political Parties increased dramatically. Local Tory activists often picked up samples of Opposition material, which was brought into the local Conservative Party office on Castle Street so that other political activists could analyse and discuss it.

Amongst this material was a letter to local residents of the Lochvale Ward in Georgetown (see Chapter Seven) in which the local Labour Party Election Agent Colin S.

was standing for a Council Ward. Such material confirmed to key Conservative Party strategists that they had correctly identified which local issues were most important in helping local Tories to firmly establish their relevance to local people. However, reading this letter from a Labour Party candidate struck Conservative Party activists thought it was both amusing and hypocritical. ‘They’re stealing our issues!’ one political activist declared, as if the local Tory campaign had at this point overtaken the local Labour Party, which was now coming ‘from behind’ and having to mimic the local Conservatives.

According to some Conservative Party activists, there were other ‘signs’ in the Labour Party’s campaign literature that suggested, in their view, the Scottish Conservatives had become ‘relevant’ to the electoral struggle for Dumfries. Two stories that appeared in the *Dumfries Constituency Rose* – the Labour Party’s glossy Election Address, delivered to local households just days ahead of Polling Day (Figure 14) – seemed to acknowledge that local Tories posed a real threat to the Labour Party’s chances of retaining the constituency. The first story was entitled ‘Labour Investment versus Tory Cuts’ and tackled one of the questions local Conservative Party strategists most wanted to avoid:

‘Have you ever wondered why Tory MSPs locally never talk about the Conservative Party’s policies? What is it they are trying to hide? Well, Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith has pledged that if elected the Tories would make massive cuts in spending on local schools, hospitals and the fight against crime. He told the Daily Telegraph on 31 December that the Tories would cut spending by “20 percent across the board”.

‘That means cuts of £115 million alone in Dumfries and Galloway! While local Tory MSPs pretend to want more spending on local services, in the Scottish Parliament they always oppose Labours’ [sic] measures to invest and improve public services and now they plan to cut that investment. The Tories must be the only people who think we need fewer doctors and fewer nurses, fewer teachers

and fewer police in Dumfries Constituency. Don't let the Tories take us back with cuts to schools and hospitals.'

The second story constituted a direct appeal to supporters of other political Parties – specifically, the Scottish Nationalists and the Liberal Democrats – who might be predisposed to vote tactically to keep the Scottish Conservatives from winning the Dumfries constituency. In 'Only Labour can keep the Tories out – Just look at the result the last time!' they argued:

'In 1999, we said only Labour could beat the Tories ... and we were right. The election in Dumfries Constituency is a clear two horse race between Labour and the Tories.

'The other parties are much too far behind – and their support is falling. The only way to be certain of keeping the Tories out of Dumfries Constituency is by voting to keep Elaine Murray as your MSP. The result will be very close, so make sure you use your vote. And make sure you use your vote for Scottish Labour.'

Some Conservative Party activists who received copies of this leaflet reacted with outrage at what they considered to be 'Labour Party lies.' Concluding that the local Labour Party had just made up the figure of £115 million in proposed Tory cuts to local services, the leaflet confirmed in the minds of these political activists what they felt they already knew: Labour Party activists would stop at nothing to win the next election. From this perspective, such 'lies' were evidence of the ruthlessness of their local Labour Party opponents and a clear demonstration of the underhand tactics that they appeared ready and willing to use in the pursuit of electoral success.

However, the reaction of individual members of the Core Campaign Team when they read *Dumfries Constituency Rose* and other Labour Party leaflets tended to differ

quite markedly in both tone and substance. Ignoring the alleged ‘lies’, they took what seemed a more measured view of this material. For a start, they often appeared more relaxed about these stories’ explicit attempts to introduce national issues into the campaign than I would have expected. This was particularly the case given the strenuous efforts to which they had gone to silence political activists like John Charteris from talking about these issues. Furthermore, they seemed somewhat bemused – and maybe even slightly amused – by the suggestion that the potential victory of David Mundell in Dumfries would spell the beginning of massive cuts in public services locally. This, after all, was simply not a credible scenario if one accepted that there was virtually no chance of the Scottish Conservatives winning Government in Scotland – a view that I encountered amongst most political activists.

For a few key Tory Party strategists, ambivalence about the re-introduction of national issues into the campaign gave way to a sense of excitement. After all, with two stories devoted to attacking the Scottish Tories appearing in their Election Address, it seemed plausible that the local Labour Party believed that the local Tories constituted ‘a threat’. ‘This shows how desperate they have become,’ said one Conservative Party activist:

‘If ever we needed proof that we are relevant, this is it. They are afraid of us. They know we can win.’

On the back of another Labour Party leaflet – and building on the themes developed in *Dumfries Constituency Rose* – appeared a ‘personal message’ from the local Labour Party candidate. Its second paragraph warned:

‘On May 1st you will have a choice between voting for continued investment in schools and hospitals with Labour or putting at risk the foundations Labour have laid. A vote for any other party in Dumfries Constituency – or worse still, no vote at all – will simply let the Tories back in. I hope therefore that you will use your votes.’

Leaflets of this kind spurred key Tory Party activists to do more in the final weeks of the campaign. Most political activists seemed upbeat and talked of victory as if it had been virtually guaranteed; the surprising sense now, then, was that the local Labour Party was struggling to ‘catch up.’ The apparent ‘threat’ that the Scottish Tories posed was put even more starkly in a Labour Party target letter delivered just days before the election, in which Dr Murray said:

‘Only Scottish Labour is committed to improving our public services and transforming our communities. A vote for any other party – or worse still, no vote at all – will put at risk the foundations Labour have laid by simply letting the Tories back in here in Dumfries Constituency.’

‘It is easy to forgot [sic] how bad things were under the Tories, who starved our schools and hospitals of investment, and who presided over record high unemployment, high mortgage rates and high inflation. There is no doubt that the Tories would try to take us back to the [sic] those years of massive spending cuts and that would mean fewer teachers, fewer nurses and fewer police.’

Having generated so much prospective momentum over the previous months, all of this ‘evidence’ suggested to local Conservative Party activists that they had succeeded in demonstrating political ‘relevance’ at a time when journalists and others continued to predict their imminent demise. Even an anti-SNP story – entitled ‘Divorce is an Expensive Business: The UK is stronger together, weaker apart’ – that much more credibly described the Scottish Tories as ‘completely powerless to stop the SNP in

Scotland' failed to diminish expectations amongst many political activists. But some key Tory Party strategists found these attacks unsettling. After all, the local Labour Party was widely credited as possessing a powerful political machine that, in their view, could not be underestimated. Even if the local Labour Party was now fighting to 'catch up' with the Scottish Conservatives, could the local Tory Party maintain momentum and snatch victory on 1 May? With this question in mind, many Conservative Party activists approached Polling Day with a mixture of excitement and trepidation.

Chapter Seven

Counting on Failure

Political observation, auditing and Polling Day

This chapter deals with an important question with which Conservative Party activists had to contend: how does one know one's efforts have made a difference? Following recent work on auditing and political observation (e.g. Jean-Klein 2003, Strathern 2000), I explore some of the methods that local Conservative Party strategists devised for assessing 'progress' – methods that were designed to produce a view of the Conservative Party campaign both in terms of its internal mechanics as well as its external effects (cf. Riles 2001). Focusing on Polling Day and the Election Count that followed, I argue that the various strategies local Tory Party activists used to 'read' what was happening around them produced some surprising – and potentially unsettling – results. This was due not least to their inability to predict the result in the light of all sorts of diverse factors – such as the weather. Furthermore, Polling Day was also marked by a sense that others' were building prospective momentum (cf. Miyazaki 2003) in their respective campaigns. In particular, some Conservative Party strategists suspected that the local Labour Party – which many Tories felt was probably now 'coming from behind', so to speak, and struggling to 'catch up' with a modern, professional Conservative Party campaign – might enjoy more support than they wanted to acknowledge.

Benchmarks

On Friday, 29 April 2003, I attended a breakfast meeting at McDonalds on the edge of town. The purpose of this meeting was unclear, but those who attended included two Scottish Conservative Parliamentarians – Peter Duncan and David Mundell – and one Election Agent – Alan M. David Mundell was running late, so discussion of the campaign commenced without him over Bacon McMuffins and coffee. After a few minutes, our conversation turned to what some will recall had been important at the Boundary Commission public inquiry outlined in Chapter Four: the numbers' game. This time, however, the arithmetic that mattered was what number of votes individual Council candidates needed in order to win their respective Wards. In the light of this discussion, we discussed the performance of one or two candidates who had become 'difficult' during the final weeks of the campaign. Diagnosing their awkwardness as a potential attack of 'candidate-itis' – a mock psychological condition that refers to the nervousness and stress candidates feel in the last days before Polling Day – those present at the meeting agreed that it was important to try and gain an 'objective' view of the performance of both the Scottish Parliament and local Council campaigns. In order to develop this view, information would have to be collected on Polling Day that could then be compared to some projected figures, which would act as 'benchmarks' for assessing the performance of individual candidates and the campaign overall.

Those present were reminded, then, of the various spreadsheets the Core Campaign Team had used in the previous four months, especially the one entitled 'Council Candidates' (see Chapter Five). This spreadsheet had, in fact, been reformatted to include new information, such as a breakdown of – amongst other data – the number of

Conservative Party ‘pledges’ and ‘possible’ voters identified through the canvas in each Ward, as well as counts for Opposition Parties (Figure 15). These figures were presented as ‘raw’ numerical information as well as percentages, and included projections of what kind of ‘swing’ key Conservative Party strategists considered was needed to win each Ward. It was felt that this spreadsheet would enable the Core Campaign Team to successfully compare the performances of individual candidates to various projections and that this, in turn, would allow key Conservative Party strategists to develop an objective view of the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign, in its aftermath.

When David Mundell arrived, there was further discussion about how many votes he required to win the Dumfries constituency. Declaring that he thought he could get ‘14,000 votes’, Peter Duncan responded thoughtfully: ‘That should be enough.’ However, it was generally felt that close attention would have to be paid to the behaviour of the Labour Party during Polling Day itself – and then watching the ballot papers at the Count in Easterbrook Hall afterwards – as this would give Conservative Party activists a potential insight into the morale and organisation of their main Opposition. In particular, David Mundell wanted to know whether his decision to campaign strongly against the closure of small, rural schools improved the electoral fortunes of the local Conservative Party. With a Primary School that had been earmarked for closure and a significant number of residents living in former Council housing, the small community of Beattock – just outside Moffat – was suggested as a kind of ‘litmus test’ on this question. Indeed, the opening of the box of ballot papers from Beattock Polling Station could provide answers to the question of whether or not local people not considered ‘natural’ Tory voters would support the Conservatives on Polling Day if they campaigned on an issue

vital to that community. Strong support for the Scottish Conservatives in Beattock might suggest that 'sticking our necks out to save their local school' had been a good political decision during the campaign.

In many ways, the McDonalds breakfast meeting was typical of the preoccupations of local Conservative Party activists in Dumfries and Galloway during the last days of the campaign before the 2003 Scottish Parliament and local Council elections. Political activists and candidates alike began to contemplate what the result of the election might mean for them as they counted down the final days, hours and (then) minutes before Polling Day. The Core Campaign Team had discussed a number of possible 'scenarios' that might arise after the election, most of which assumed that local Conservatives would enjoy some degree of electoral success on Polling Day. For instance, one such scenario involved local Conservative councillors negotiating to form a Council Administration with another group (most probably the Independents or the Liberal Democrats), but only on the basis of having won fifteen Council Wards – effectively, an increase of seven Councillors on the 1999 local Government election result. Generally, most political activists seemed upbeat about the campaign, believing that 'the tide had turned' and the momentum was now with the Scottish Conservatives. Furthermore, some believed that the local Labour Party were feeling under pressure and were now effectively 'coming from behind'. One phrase I heard a lot from at least one Conservative Party candidate for the Scottish Parliament and several standing for the Council was that the difference between their campaign in 2003 and that of 1999 was like the difference 'between night and day'. Few seemed to entertain the possibility that David Mundell might not defeat his Labour Party opponent in the Dumfries constituency.

Just a few days into the campaign, one key Tory Party strategist told me that while he thought Alex Fergusson was 'not going to make it' on Polling Day, he reckoned that David Mundell would win 'by about 1000 votes'. A candidate standing for a Council Ward within Dumfries Burgh was in the habit of declaring that 'Elaine Murray is finished' and that David Mundell would win 'with a 2000-3000 vote majority'. The enthusiasm of political activists was highly infectious and even those with little direct involvement in the campaign seemed to anticipate victory. Key Tory Party strategists remained hopeful of success.

As Polling Day approached, however, some political activists became uneasy. In the final couple of days before 1 May, many campaigning in Dumfries began to see signs of Labour Party activity. When leaflets were deposited on the doormats of Town Centre households, one would often notice Labour Party and sometimes other leaflets stuffed through the same letterboxes. As if they were shadow boxing with local Labour Party activists, there was a sense amongst local Conservatives that others were mimicking their efforts, and that rival political activists were sometimes lurking around street corners, just a few steps ahead (or behind). Such unease reminded several political activists from Dumfries that they had borne the brunt of a slick Labour Party operation in past elections, which encouraged them to counsel their colleagues 'never to underestimate the local Labour Party machine' – a view that was regularly reinforced to me by my non-Tory informants as well. Furthermore, David Mundell himself remained agitated. During a car journey in Dumfriesshire towards the end of April, I asked him how he was feeling about the upcoming elections. His reaction was tense:

‘I have no idea. It’s just too close to call. I just have to accept that there is not a single person in the entire world who could give me an objective opinion on how the election will go on Thursday.’

According to David Mundell, the local Labour Party possessed ‘a formidable machine’ that had beaten him once before in the previous Scottish Parliament election. Furthermore, he had stated to me on an earlier occasion that it was ‘quite clear’ there was more potential support for the Labour Party in the Dumfries constituency than for the Scottish Conservatives. He added that just because the local Labour Party might not appear to be doing very much, one should not assume that it was therefore doing nothing. Despite the sense that by April 2003 the Conservative Party campaign had achieved considerable momentum, David Mundell and others often felt the need to remind themselves that regardless of what happened in the days and weeks beforehand, only what happened on Polling Day itself would decide the outcome of the elections.

In the rest of this chapter, then, I analyse some of the ways in which key Conservative Party strategists ‘read’ the events of Polling Day and its aftermath. Recounting my own movements during the 36-hour period of the Poll and the Count that followed, I follow Coles (2004) who argues in an account of ‘Election Day’ in Bosnia-Herzegovina that democratic elections create the conditions in which certain kinds of knowledge practices are empowered and legitimated. To put this point another way, certain kinds of relations and knowledge are made explicit on Polling Day while others are cast to the background (cf. Edwards 2000). However, a few theoretical points must be made before I present the following ethnographic material. Firstly, while Coles’ paper explores these processes from a location within a network of Polling Officials, this chapter attempts to understand how a group of political activists observed and made sense

of the practices of both themselves and others' – including the local Labour Party and Polling Officials at the Count. From this perspective, the ethnographic material in this chapter could be read in parallel to that which Coles (2004) presents. Secondly, I take a strong cue from Iris Jean-Klein's work (2002) on political observation 'exercises' during the first Palestinian intifada. For instance, key Conservative Party strategists keen to assess the success or failure of their joint campaign for the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections could be said to have attempted a kind of audit (cf. Strathern 2000) of their campaign machinery. Through close observation of what did and did not happen on Polling Day, they hoped to get a sense of what did or did not work. Polling Day, then, was an opportunity for the Core Campaign Team to hold Conservative Party activists and candidates accountable in the sense that if someone did not achieve what had been projected in the spreadsheet, they would know where to look – or who to interrogate – in order to determine what went wrong. Members of the Core Campaign Team hoped the spreadsheet would introduce a level of accountability once the Poll had been counted by rendering the Conservative Party campaign transparent (cf. Levine 2004) to their (internal) reading of both its mechanics and external effects. But as Polling Day continued, attempts at auditing the Conservative Party campaign were forgotten as old anxieties returned.

It is, perhaps, unsurprising that the efforts of Conservative Party activists to make judgments about the success or failure of their campaign in the light of a spreadsheet might lend itself to a comparison with auditing (e.g. Strathern 2000). In addition, Conservative Party activists knew that their activities were under constant observation by their political opponents – especially the Labour Party. During the campaign, political

activists often speculated about whether or not the local Labour Party had discerned the Scottish Conservatives' strengths and/or weaknesses before they had themselves.

Furthermore:

'Audits are now the dominant means by which, in contemporary and self-avowed liberal democracies, the performance of corporate organisations and public institutions are measured, and the allocation of critical resources – material as well as symbolic and/or ideological – is structured. Moreover, even if an institution assumes it could, in purely financial terms, afford to opt out of proliferating audit regimes – officially, auditees' participation in such exercises is always rendered as voluntary, in a political climate in which *transparency* (allowing others full view of the organisation of one's productivity) has come to be equated with integrity and a democratic ethos ... participation becomes *necessary* if an enterprise is to maintain its democratic image and public credibility. ...' (Jean-Klein 2002:50)

Following Maurer (2002), one way in which the material presented here could be analysed is as a kind of 'accounts keeping'. In his analysis of Islamic banking practices, he argues that the 'metapragmatics' of accounting:

'... [Assume] an identity with the very form of knowledge which is intrinsic to reflexive anthropological reason, a form that is based on nested hierarchies of abstraction and an inevitable partiality of perspective through which perspective, as an organising rubric for anthropological knowledge, reveals itself in its own failure ... The same is true for any critical enterprise... [As] a process of abstracting from a field of practice, it will always overlook some phenomena to make visible others. For accounting, the result is an open-endedness belied by the apparent stability of the balance sheet.' (Maurer 2002:646)

The same could be said of the political activist's equivalent to an accountant's balance sheet: the spreadsheet detailing 'pledged' targets (Figure 15). While Conservative Party activists generally acknowledged their canvas was riddled with errors because of poor data-collecting from previous campaigns – especially that preceding the electoral

catastrophe of 1997 – the spreadsheet offered an illusion of certainty when the numbers, so to speak, were anything but stable.

Furthermore, the idea of using such a spreadsheet to ‘benchmark’ success assumed that some candidates would fail to achieve the targets projected within it. In other words, the spreadsheet anticipated failure on some level. In highlighting this point, however, I am pursuing a different argument to that which Miyazaki (2003) made about the role of both hope and failure in the work of Japanese stockbrokers (cf. Miyazaki and Riles n.d.). While one might argue that the Japanese financial analysts Miyazaki describes hoped that in failure they might learn something useful about the inadequacies of their own financial instruments and models, it would be disingenuous to suggest something similar of Conservative Party activists. Put simply, they did not ‘hope’ to fail because they were eager to learn something about electoral theory and practice that they did not previously know. Even if the various instruments they devised anticipated that some aspects of their campaign machinery would be found wanting, most Conservative Party activists rather hoped that their campaign would be successful. Indeed, their ideal probably would have been for the campaign to exceed their own expectations for one very simple reason: unlike Japanese financial analysts, they had many incentives – financial and otherwise – to hope for success.

The irony here, though, is that if their campaign did exceed such expectations, their benchmarks would be eclipsed and rendered ineffective and redundant. In this sense, Conservative Party activists could be said to have hoped that their spreadsheet would ‘fail’ to say anything relevant about their campaign. After all, what they desired more than accuracy in their spreadsheet was to be able to ‘pull the rug from under’ a slick

Labour Party machine and have their respective anxieties about their location in the ‘new’ political landscape of post-devolution Scotland dashed. As will become clear, however, the election results contained many surprises – not least for Conservative Party activists confident of an electoral breakthrough. The inability of key Conservative Party strategists to accurately predict the outcome of the elections therefore complicated what otherwise seemed a straightforward question they hoped the Count would help them answer: how does one know one’s efforts have made a difference? Given the impossibility of predicting these results – in hindsight, an obvious point to Conservative Party activists themselves – it is not surprising that in the aftermath of Polling Day the ‘benchmarks’ proposed at the breakfast meeting at McDonalds were discarded and never once mentioned again.

Polling Day

I spent much of Polling Day itself with one member of the Core Campaign Team – Alan M. – engaged in a variety of activities around the Dumfries constituency. Most of these activities were focused on ‘getting out the vote’ (GOTV) and then, later that evening, assisting with efforts to scrutinise the counting of ballot papers in Easterbrook Hall. We also remained in contact by telephone with other political activists and a number of interested observers.

The forces at work on Polling Day were very rarely within view; Alan M. and I could only glimpse much of this activity. Whether or not they told us much about the efforts of local Conservatives or other political activists, what we saw most often constituted the artefacts of activist labour (cf. Riles 2001): leaflets left on doorsteps,

Conservative Party banners erected in farmers' fields or Labour Party posters plastered to the back windscreens of vehicles in Dumfries. Such discursive artefacts evoked images of activism that had remained largely out of sight of Conservative Party activists: the stuffing of envelopes, the leafleting of streets, the telephoning of households and the canvassing of doorsteps would have been as labour-intensive an exercise for others as it was for the local Conservatives. On Polling Day, such glimpses of the work of other political activists were highly suggestive and very unsettling, despite the sense of prospective momentum generated during the previous weeks and months.

Polling Stations opened at 7am on Thursday, 1 May and closed at 10pm that night. Living in the Town Centre of Dumfries, I walked into the Conservative Party office in Castle Street just after 9 o'clock that morning. When I arrived, I was surprised at how quiet it was after weeks of so much frenetic activity. Alan M. was alone in the office, pottering about amongst the many piles of leaflets, literature and empty boxes that had been accumulated during the course of the campaign. Other staff members were not there. Alan M. explained that they were out in the constituency leafleting. None of the volunteers I had seen regularly in previous weeks were present either, and the telephones were eerily silent. Alan M. had switched on a radio in the background, which because of the media blackout enforced on Polling Day itself sounded strangely 'normal' with the usual sounds of popular music and DJ banter.

Sitting down with a cup of coffee, I felt like I had checked in an hour or so too late. With the electoral 'battle' raging on the streets of Dumfries and in the villages of Dumfriesshire, I imagined dozens of political activists letterboxing local households with Polling Day leaflets as local Tories mobilised to 'get out the vote' (GOTV). The reality

was probably not nearly so dramatic but there was an air of expectation that morning. Chatting to Alan M., I learnt that Gillian W. and other members of staff and volunteers would be coming to the office later that morning to start on the telephone 'knock-up' (see below). Meanwhile, David Mundell was travelling to key Polling Stations in Dumfriesshire to chat with local supporters before returning to his home in Moffat to conduct his own telephone knock-up in the afternoon. Meanwhile, other volunteers were on hand to knock-up other parts of the constituency by telephone, including one political activist in Annan who had a real passion for telephone canvassing. With little to do ourselves, Alan M. decided our time would be best spent leaving the office to go door-to-door in Dumfries and help 'get out the vote'.

After locking the office, Alan M. drove me to Georgetown, a large private housing estate on the South East edge of Dumfries. Local Conservatives generally viewed Georgetown a 'swing' area in which there was a significant Scottish Conservative support base outnumbered by Labour voters. Therefore regarded an important area for local Tory activism, key Conservative Party strategists generally believed that if the Party lost the boxes from the local Polling Stations on a ratio of 3 votes to 2, then the Scottish Conservatives stood a good chance of winning the Dumfries constituency outright. The ballot boxes from Georgetown were thus considered crucial to watch at the Count that evening.

As we drove, we both noticed several vehicles sporting bright, red posters stuck to their back windscreens. On closer inspection, these posters were A4 sheets of coloured paper declaring support for the local Labour Party candidate, Dr Elaine Murray.

One vehicle we passed was a large 4WD Landrover and we noticed more cars with 'Elaine Murray' posters. My impression at the time was that every third or fourth car we passed had one of these posters stuck to their back windscreens. On reflection, this does not seem very likely given that in a town the size of Dumfries this would have translated into several thousand vehicles with Labour Party posters plastered to their windows. But the number of vehicles involved in this public display of support for the local Labour Party must have nevertheless left a strong impression. Furthermore, I did not see a single car displaying a poster for David Mundell, which created a strong sense that residents of the Town were firmly backing the local Labour Party. For the first time, I felt trepidation for my local Conservative Party informants.

As Alan M. observed the plethora of Elaine Murray posters, he fell silent. I asked him what he was thinking and he simply stated that there seemed to be more posters than he would have liked to see displayed. Whether or not he found this unsettling was unclear but his mood visibly improved when we passed Georgetown Library – which was being used as a Polling Station – and we saw the Conservative Party candidate for one of the local Council Wards standing by its door with her blue, Conservative Party rosette pinned to her blouse. The fact that the incumbent Independent councillor accompanied her while the local Labour Party candidate was nowhere to be seen seemed a good sign to Alan M.

We turned into a side street in Georgetown and parked the car. Alan M. gave me a list of house numbers in which local people who had pledged their support to the Conservative Party lived. These were homes whose telephone numbers were not publicly available and were therefore not contactable through the telephone knock-up that would

start later that morning. Grabbing some Polling Day leaflets, I agreed to 'knock up' the doors of three of four houses, which had been highlighted on my list in a small cul-de-sac. Alan M. went to the next street as I knocked on the first door. It very quickly became obvious that there was nobody home. In fact, the whole street looked deserted. I stuffed a Polling Day leaflet into the first letterbox and moved on to the next house.

As I suspected, no one was home on that street and it did not take me long to finish knocking up the list. I was walking back down the street when Alan M. approached in his car. When I climbed into the passenger seat, he said: 'I've just seen Colin S.!' At that moment, Colin S. – the local Labour Party's Election Agent – walked into the street, wearing a red rosette and carrying his own bunch of Polling Day leaflets, along with a clipboard.

'I think we should go to another part of Georgetown,' Alan M. said.

Colin S. glanced at us as we drove past him – and then quickly averted his gaze, pretending not to have seen us. We drove further up the hill to an area that Alan M. described as 'quite good' for the Scottish Conservatives. The area would have been considered superficially promising because of the number of large, affluent houses, which many Conservative Party activists took to constitute a visual clue as to where they might find potential supporters. We got out of the car and started knocking up a couple of streets.

Again, I finished quickly because no one was home in the houses that I visited. It seemed that Georgetown was a very quiet suburb on a Thursday afternoon, which might not be that surprising given the number of young families and commuters who live in the area. As I came down the hill again, however, I saw that a man had

stopped Alan M. in his front garden and was now talking to him. I waited for about ten minutes before Alan M. came back down the street. He did not say much until we got to his car. He then told me that the man had been a local supporter who claimed that the Conservative Party never did anything productive and that he never heard from them. Given all the work of the previous weeks, and the many thousands of leaflets that had been printed and distributed – of which this particular individual was presumably unaware – Alan M. had been more than a little annoyed by this statement. It was also a moment when one sensed that the prospective momentum built up by a small, dedicated group of Conservative Party activists might not really matter as much as many had assumed if it was not visible to – and had not been noticed by – those ‘outside’ the campaign. Of course, Alan M. explained that he had politely listened as this man had pointed to the houses around him and stated that all of his neighbours were potential Tory voters but that they would not be voting for the Scottish Conservatives because they never heard from the Party. ‘Why haven’t you been leafleting us?’ he had asked.

Putting his irritation to one side, Alan M. drove us to another part of Georgetown where, according to the Conservative Party canvas, there was a concentration of Tory voters. Parking at the entrance to another cul-de-sac that led uphill to a number of large houses, I got out of the car and started waling up the street. Like the other streets I had knocked up, this one seemed very quiet. Most of the driveways were empty, and I glanced around me as I walked – just in case I spotted Colin S. again, or another Labour Party activist.

The day was sunny despite being overcast and it might have been warm had it not been for a slight breeze; the clouds on the horizon threatened rain. As I walked along,

however, I noticed something hanging from the front doorknob of the house nearest to me. It looked like a big, red question mark, shaped similarly to the kinds of 'Do Not Disturb' signs one might hang from the doorknob of a hotel room. Walking on, I saw another of these red question marks, dangling from the door of another house. Stopping, I glanced at the front doors of all the houses in the street. Almost every single one of them had one of these signs hanging from the front door. Given that there were only about ten houses on this street, I was able to quickly establish from my canvas sheet that the two or three houses I had been asked to knock up were amongst the very few that did not have such a sign hanging from it.

My curiosity aroused, I jogged up the driveway of the nearest house and looked more closely at the hanging question mark. As I suspected, this question mark was the Labour Party's Polling Day leaflet. Simply saying 'Remember to use your votes for Labour today', I grabbed it and pocketed it so that I could show Alan M. I did this with a couple of other houses too, as I thought some of my Conservative Party informants would probably want 'souvenirs' for their own files on the campaign. I then knocked up the remaining houses on my list.

Coming back down the hill, I reflected on the significance of what all these Labour Party leaflets meant, displayed on the front doors of those houses omitted from my canvas sheet. Two points were obvious. Firstly, as local Conservatives had been busy identifying their own sources of support in the community, the local Labour Party had been doing its own canvassing – and there were more Labour Party voters 'out there' than local Conservatives had often assumed in daily conversation. Secondly, local Labour Party activists had leafleted these streets shortly before our arrival and might still

be in the area. Both these realisations challenged the idea that local Conservatives had achieved the kind of momentum in their campaign that it was now the local Labour Party who was coming 'from behind', so to speak. Like the Elaine Murray posters we had seen earlier, the 'presence' of the red Polling Day leaflet hanging from the doorknobs of nearby houses contributed to the impression that the local Labour Party had been marking the Town as their territory.

I caught up with Alan M., who had also noticed the Labour Party leaflets. We drove down the hill and pulled up outside a house with an overgrown garden, which he asked me to letterbox with the Conservatives' Polling Day leaflet. When I returned, he said: 'We've been spotted.'

Assuming that he meant there were local Labour Party activists leafleting the same street as us, I asked: 'Where?' Then, glancing around me, I saw two young women standing up the hill, both wearing Labour Party rosettes and carrying clipboards. They had been talking before one of them spotted us further down the street. They had now fallen silent and stopped walking; one of them was quickly dialling a number on her mobile phone. Her colleague continued watching us as she spoke to someone on her phone.

'They will be reporting into the Labour Party headquarters, telling them they've spotted Conservative Party activity,' Alan M. explained. 'I think we'd better go somewhere else.' So we drove to the other side of Georgetown.

After knocking up a few more households, the sky darkened and it started to rain. Rather than drive straight back to the office, Alan M. suggested that we tour the streets of

Dumfries and see if we could ‘spot’ local Labour Party activity (cf. Jean-Klein 2002). I agreed to his suggestion and we drove back towards the Town Centre. However, we detoured down Glencaple Road when we reached the St Michaels Street traffic lights. We drove for some time around the Carlaevrock Ward – mainly the Crichton University Campus and Kingholm Quay – without seeing any Labour Party activists. During these minutes, Alan M. detailed a theory many Election Agents adopted to ‘read’ Opposition activity. Basically, such ‘readings’ depended on where one sighted such activity; were they in ‘your’ Council Wards or ‘theirs’? Alan M. said:

‘If you see the Labour Party in your areas, then you know you’re in trouble. That would be a sign that they are really confident and don’t have to worry about getting their vote out. If you saw them out in places like Marchmount and Maxwelltown at this time of day would be a really bad sign [for the Conservatives].

‘Of course, if they’re in trouble, you would expect to see them out in their areas. If they know they’re going to have a bad election, they will be working hard in places like Lochside, making sure that they got their hard-core supporters out.’

Apparently, this kind of activity was especially important if there was a low turnout of voters on Polling Day. It could mean, for example, that Opposition supporters were staying at home, which meant that if local Tories could get their own vote out in significant numbers they stood a strong chance of winning the election.

Noting that we had seen Labour Party activists out in Georgetown – a swing area – I asked Alan M. how his theory might explain their efforts.

‘I have no idea,’ he said.

We therefore decided to drive across the Town to Lochside to see if Labour Party activists were busy in one of their electoral ‘strongholds’ in Dumfries. Glancing down

the Friars Vennel as we drove along the Whitesands, we saw lights on in the local Labour Party office but all the blinds were drawn. Alan M. concluded that this probably meant Labour Party activists were out somewhere, doing something. Alternatively, it might also mean that they were busily knocking up supporters over the telephone. We drove across the Buccleuch Street Bridge, on our way to Lochside.

It had started to rain and the weather appeared to be getting worse, with an increasingly heavy shower outside. It did not seem like promising weather in which to be knocking up door-to-door as we drove into Lochside.

We approached a church on our left and Alan M. pulled over. Lochside Church was being used as a Polling Booth and he decided to enter it and find out what voter turnout had been up until that time of the day. As an Election Agent, Alan M. was entitled to enter any Polling Booth in the Dumfries constituency. I waited for him in the car as he entered the Polling Booth, which seemed fairly quiet and was not busy at all in the rain. A few minutes later, he returned, with the news that turnout had been very low so far that day. This fact was encouraging, he said, as it indicated that the local Labour Party might find it difficult to get their vote out. It also suggested that the election might be fought on a low turnout overall. If Tory voters were going out to vote and Labour Party supporters were staying home, there was good reason to speculate that the local Conservatives might win the constituency.

Buoyed by this development, Alan M. drove further into Lochside looking for signs of the local Labour Party. I noticed one or two cars displaying Elaine Murray posters as well as some others plastered to the front windows of nearby flats. But it was

with some surprise that we suddenly came upon a large number of local Labour Party activists, soaked in the downpour, huddled under umbrellas and studying dampened maps and canvas sheets at the side of the road. We counted around 5-6 of them, before spotting a couple more down a footpath. The group included Dr Elaine Murray and several other well-known Labour Party activists from Dumfries. We drove past them before turning at the end of the road to get a better look at what they were doing – and drove past them a second time.

Alan M. was clearly jubilant at spotting the local Labour Party marooned in such large numbers in the middle of a heavy rain shower. Furthermore, they had been sighted in one of ‘their’ Wards, which fuelled his excitement even more. If his theory on how to read Opposition activity on Polling Day was correct, then the Conservatives were not just about to achieve an historic victory in the Dumfries constituency; Alan M. explained they might well win by a landslide. The low turnout detected at the local Polling Station combined with the sight of local Labour Party activists caught – and hopefully lost – in the rain might confirm what key Conservative Party strategists had hoping for some time: that the wheels had fallen off the local Labour Party machine and they were now heading for defeat.

Following a ‘celebratory’ lunch at McDonalds on the way back into Dumfries, Alan M. and I returned to the Conservative Party office. It was unrecognisable as the empty place we had left that morning. Now full of activity, various members of staff had returned from their earlier tasks, as had a handful of volunteers. They were now working through

lists of telephone numbers and making hundreds – perhaps thousands – of telephone calls to ‘get out the vote’ as part of the much-discussed ‘telephone knock-up.’

There were five telephone lines from the office but not all of them were in use at the same time. One was a Parliamentary line, which could not be used for political campaigning. This was kept free so that activists and members of the general public could call the office if there was a need for them to do so. Another was a fax line, which later in the day was taken over by one enthusiastic volunteer who decided to help with the telephone knock-up in the evening¹⁴⁵. That left three lines for telephoning, and secretarial staff and volunteers were using them all as they methodically moved down their lists.

They also operated from a script, which had been composed in the final days of the campaign. Given that the people who were being telephoned had previously indicated a willingness to consider voting for the local Conservatives, this script assumed that the vast majority of the individuals on the list for the telephone knock up would be supportive. Short and succinct, the primary piece of information sought in the script was whether or not the individual had voted and, if they had not, whether or not they intended to vote. When it had been established that someone had voted, their name would be crossed off the list with a ruler and pencil. Telephonists would also use this opportunity to confirm that the individuals to whom they were talking were likely to have voted Tory, just so the accuracy of the canvas returns could be checked again; this would usually be confirmed in the right-hand column of the sheet.

¹⁴⁵ The telephone ‘knock up’ continued until eight o’clock in the evening. Because many Conservative Party supporters were elderly, it was generally thought that ringing them any later than this time would be rude and disrespectful

I asked one volunteer how the telephoning had been progressing. She responded that the people to whom they had spoken seemed very supportive. Most of them had already voted or would be voting, a fact that seemed to corroborate our own experience on the doorsteps of Dumfries even though we had only encountered a handful of people at home. In fact, they had now almost completed their lists and were about to commence some telephoning for Alex Fergusson in the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale constituency, for whom lists had been faxed for Conservative pledges around Stranraer. They intended to make a start on them some time during the afternoon.

These results seemed to suggest that much of the local pledged support for the local Conservative Party had already voted. In contrast, the turnout in those Council Wards where the local Labour Party was thought to be stronger was low. This appeared to suggest that the local Tories were, in fact, 'ahead' of the Labour Party at that time of the day. Indeed, most of the political activists in the office thought that this was probably true since, because of the rain, it was widely thought the local Labour Party would be struggling to 'catch up' with the Tories at this stage.

Despite the apparent success of the exercise, this volunteer observed that some people had been 'annoying'. Some Conservatives were adamant that they would not be voting, because in their view 'it made no difference'. Alan M. seemed a little unnerved by this observation and asked the volunteer what some people had meant when they made this statement. She said she did not know.

It was clear that there was nothing for us to do in the office. We resolved to go back out on the streets of Dumfries to continue 'knocking up' on the doorstep of houses for whom the telephone numbers were not publicly available. Before we left,

another volunteer received a telephone call from Scottish Conservative Central Office, which a local supporter had contacted in search of a lift to her nearest Polling Station. Alan M. agreed to give this elderly woman a lift so she could vote.

It was still raining as we drove to the elderly supporter's house in Noblehill, on the edge of Dumfries. As we drove, we talked about the reasons why some Conservatives were refusing to come out and vote. We had both encountered a handful of local Tories who possessed mixed feelings about their local candidate. For some, David Mundell was not 'right-wing enough' and he certainly was not a 'traditional Tory.' It also seemed plausible that some still considered him a 'turn-coat' from the days he represented Lockerbie as a SDP Councillor in the mid-1980s when Margaret Thatcher was at the peak of her powers; this was a view that I had encountered occasionally amongst some local Conservatives. However, we both thought it was more likely that some local Tories remained unreconstructed in their views on devolution. Before and during the campaign, Alan M. had received a couple of letters from disgruntled supporters who refused to cast a vote in the Scottish Parliament election because that would give the Scottish Parliament some legitimacy¹⁴⁶. While he did not believe many local Tories shared this view, he expressed some concern because in a close contest, 'every vote could matter.' On one point Alan M. seemed certain: if the Scottish Conservatives won the Dumfries constituency that day, it would be with a very small margin.

However, there was another, troubling possibility – a conundrum for the Core Campaign Team that had vexed them throughout much of their strategic planning. Was it

¹⁴⁶ These individuals often took a similar view towards voting in elections for the European Parliament, the legitimacy of which they also opposed.

possible that some local voters – whether Conservative supporters or not – had decided not to participate in the election because they ‘knew’ that their vote would not make a difference in changing the Government of Scotland? For many months – and despite the best efforts of the SNP – no one seemed to believe that after Polling Day a Government would form that did not include the Scottish Labour Party or the Liberal Democrats. In such a political landscape, what real incentive was there for local people to turn out and vote? Indeed, just how *could* a Conservative MSP make a difference in Dumfries – even if he or she was elected? It was entirely possible that by declaring their intention not to vote at all, some Tory supporters clearly understood that under Proportional Representation, their ballot paper was unlikely to make much of a difference to the outcome of the Scottish Parliament elections.

However, considering all of these possibilities, Alan M. simply had no idea why some Conservatives refused to vote on Polling Day. This was especially true given that Dumfries was one of the few Parliamentary constituencies in Scotland that the Tories actually could win from the Labour Party. Nor did Alan M. have any idea whether the result would be close that night and, therefore, whether the refusal of some local Conservatives to use their votes would deny local Tories victory. Our discussion could add nothing more than speculation to these difficult questions.

We arrived and picked up the elderly supporter. Alan M. stayed in his car while I helped her into the Polling Station. Carefully avoiding a young Labour Party activist standing by the door with a clipboard in her hands, we made our way to the desk at which a couple of Polling Officials sat; they then assisted her while I waited. After returning this elderly

supporter to her home, we drove into rural Dumfriesshire to see if we could identify any more Labour Party activity. Contemplating his theory about how to read one's political opponents on Polling Day, Alan M. seemed quietly confident of sighting evidence that might allow us to develop a better idea of how local Labour Party activists rated their chances that evening. On my part, I was eager to develop a better overview of the day's events in the light of my ethnographic interests.

We drove out through the Heathhall and Lochar Council Wards in Northeast Dumfries. Beyond the boundaries of the Town, we turned off the A75 and headed towards the tiny village of Ae – famous for possessing the shortest name of any town or village in Britain. We did not see anything interesting in Ae; the Polling Station seemed deserted. We then drove back towards Lochmaben and then Lockerbie, again without seeing much political activity – from Labour Party or any other activists.

Alan M. then decided to drive to Annan through the rural Council Ward of Hoddum and Kinmount. This Ward contained a high number of Conservative Party voters and was represented by the popular local Tory Councillor Andrew Bell-Irving. An affable local landowner whose family had a long association with the local district, Councillor Bell-Irving was once described to me by one of my non-Tory informants as 'a likeable bloke' who played the role of 'the fat country squire' in the local area. 'You could just imagine him,' she said, 'in bygone days, sitting on horseback and chatting to the peasants.' Furthermore, Alan M. explained to me that Councillor Bell-Irving was self-conscious about the fact he seemed to fit a certain Tory stereotype almost perfectly. He had commented to him on a previous occasion that he would not have been able to get elected to Council in any Ward other than Hoddum and Kinmount, where there was a

strong concentration of wealthy, landed families living in '*Big Hooses*'. Indeed, as we drove through the area, the rain had stopped completely and we passed a number of gates and gatehouses guarding secluded, wooded estates, glistening in the sun. Alan M. described the local area the Tory heartland of rural Dumfriesshire.

This point was highlighted when we passed a small church covered in 'Scottish Conservative' banners. This buoyed Alan M.'s spirits; it certainly seemed a refreshing change from the countless number of Elaine Murray posters we had sighted in Dumfries. Continuing on our journey, however, we passed nothing else to suggest it was Polling Day until we came to the small town of Annan. As we drove back to join the A75 to return to Dumfries some fifteen miles away, we passed a field on the outskirts of town with a huge 'Vote Conservative' poster stretched across it. Excited, Alan M. cheered. A few miles further along the A75, we passed another massive 'Scottish Conservative' poster, this time attached to the back of a piece of farm machinery by the side of the road. These posters, apparently, had been erected by friends of an awkward political activist, whose reputation momentarily improved in the eyes of Alan M. 'I always knew he was good for something.'

It was early evening by the time we reached Dumfries. Driving back up the Whitesands on our way back to the local Conservative Party office, we decided to take a short detour down the Friars Vennel past the local Labour Party office¹⁴⁷. Straining to glimpse local Labour Party activists as we approached their office, we drove very slowly down the Vennel. Dozens of people were walking down the middle of the cobbled street and there

¹⁴⁷ The Friars Vennel is one of the oldest streets in Dumfries and, according to local historians, is the oldest shopping 'precinct' in Scotland (Fortune and McMillan 2005).

were a couple of cars parked near the office itself, which narrowed our passage even more. Just as we neared the front door to the office, it suddenly opened and about over half a dozen prominent local Labour Party activists came running out. Alan M. seemed stunned as they surrounded the car, as if they had been waiting in ambush. Then, apparently not noticing us, they climbed into the two cars parked by the office, and drove out behind us. We stopped at the bottom of the Vennel to turn right onto the Whitesands, the two vehicles pulling up behind us. Amongst the local Labour Party activists we could see in the first car, we identified several Labour Party candidates for local Council as well as the Labour MP Russell Brown. Watching them in his side mirror, Alan M. wondered aloud where they might be going. Once we had turned right, we were able to see that they were turning left – which could take them out of Dumfries, or though Georgetown.

‘Do you think they’re going to Annan?’ I asked.

‘I don’t know,’ said Alan M.

After a pause, I said: ‘Where do you think they are going?’

‘I don’t know,’ Alan M. repeated, looking worried.

Several people were still making telephone calls from the Conservative Party office when we arrived there a few minutes later. An anxious David Mundell had also arrived. Alan M. disappeared into his room while I spoke to Mr Mundell in the reception foyer. I told him about the various Labour Party activists we had seen earlier that day as well as what we had just witnessed (cf. Malkki 1997:94-95) outside the local Labour Party office. This did not make him any less anxious. He said:

‘Well, it’s too bad the rain has stopped. This is the time when the Labour Party can get its vote out. After all, Labour voters come out at night.’

Around this time, one of my non-Tory informants rang my mobile. With David Mundell distracted by other activity in the office, I moved to the small boardroom that the Core Campaign Team had used for its weekly meetings over the previous months. The informant who had rung me – Rachael T. – then told me that she had voted earlier in the day and was now at her parents’ house.

In the background, I could hear some kind of commotion. Rachael T. said that a young Labour Party activist had just knocked on the front door of her parents’ house. This political activist had asked her parents – both Labour Party supporters – if they had voted yet that day. Responding that they had not, the young woman on their doorstep asked if they would mind coming down to the local Polling Station and casting their vote as they expected the result ‘to be extremely close’ in the Dumfries constituency. Rachael T.’s parents agreed, picked up their coats and headed out into the evening. Rachael T. also told me that she could see several other Labour Party activists knocking on doors further down her parents’ street¹⁴⁸. My thoughts returned to the local Labour Party activists we had seen hastily leaving the Friars Vennel just an hour or so before as our conversation drew to an end.

I received two more calls on my mobile phone that evening. One was from a young Conservative Party activist who lived in Stranraer. He told me that he was feeling positive and was in the process of driving across the region to Dumfries at that moment to

¹⁴⁸ Several houses had displayed ‘Elaine Murray’ posters on this street, which one local Tory candidate had described as ‘a hotbed of socialism.’

attend the Count at Easterbrook Hall that night. He also planned to stay in Dumfries that evening so he could attend the counting of ballot papers for the local Council elections, which would take place in Loreburn Hall the following day. I then spoke to the Scottish Conservative candidate in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Alex Fergusson, who was also feeling upbeat as he, too, drove to the Count. In particular, he observed that passing so many 'Scottish Conservative' posters in farmers' fields by the A75 – many of these farmers being his personal friends and acquaintances – was especially 'gratifying'.¹⁴⁹

As Alan M. and I headed over to Easterbrook Hall for the Count, we dropped into the Cresswell Community Centre, which was being used as a Polling Station. Alan M. returned to the car once he had checked voter turnout, which seemed low. Cautiously, he welcomed this fact since Cresswell was a part of Dumfries in which the Labour Party enjoyed a lot of support. Not known for his optimistic outlook on the Scottish Conservatives' chances in these elections, it seemed that even Alan M. might have started to anticipate some success that evening.

The Count

In the week before Polling Day, various Tory candidates standing in the elections had appointed Polling and Counting Agents. While a Polling Agent was entitled to enter Polling Stations to take note of voter turnout, a Counting Agent was allowed to observe the counting of the ballot papers in Easterbrook Hall to ensure that there were no 'irregularities'. I had been appointed a Counting Agent for David Mundell that evening.

¹⁴⁹ Dismissive of the support Mr Fergusson enjoyed amongst local farmers, his SNP opponent quipped to local journalists: 'Sheep don't vote.'

The Returning Officer – a senior Council official – had posted the relevant paperwork to each Counting Agent a couple of days before Polling Day. My pack included, amongst other items, a ‘pass’ with which to enter the Count; guidelines on conduct during the Count; instructions on what constituted a valid ballot paper; and a floor plan of Easterbrook Hall that provided details of which part of the facility remained accessible to a Counting Agent. The Count took place in the main Hall – although most of it remained ‘off limits’ to Counting Agents, who were left with a small area near the stage in which to mingle. Several dozen – perhaps as many as 100 – Council employees were seated beside long tables ready to commence the sorting of ballot papers before counting them. Other senior Council officials were engaged in discussions at the ‘back’ of the Count, as were a handful of Police officers. While some local journalists mingled with the Counting Agents, most were in an upstairs seating area that had been kept free for local and national journalists. Amongst them were some television (ITV Border) and radio journalists.

As we arrived, Alan M. and I encountered other Conservative Party Counting Agents. Some other political activists were already there – including the SNP candidate Andrew Wood and his Election Agent, loading up a laptop in one corner of the room where they had found an unused power point. At that point in time, there were no Labour Party activists present except for their candidate for the Dumfries constituency Dr Elaine Murray and her husband. As a result, local Tories were unsure whether or not this meant that the local Labour Party was confident of victory. After all, so Conservative Party activists told me, they tended to arrive late into the Count if they thought they were going

to win; Dr Murray's presence suggested that at least a couple of Labour Party activists were less certain of what would unfold that evening

Key Conservative Party strategists considered the role of Counting Agent crucial not only because they were necessary for ensuring that the transparency of the Count itself. If present during the opening of the boxes as they arrived from Polling Stations, Counting Agents could help identify sources of Tory electoral strength. Armed with pencil and clipboards, well-organised Counting Agents mimicked Polling Officials (cf. Coles 2004, Levine 2004:92) as they sorted and counted the ballot papers to produce their own mock 'count'. Individual counting 'sheets' would then be collected following Polling Day to try and get an overview of where the Conservative Party vote is concentrated. If done well, key Conservative Party strategists also hoped that they might gain an early indication as to how the election might eventually turn out.

Of course, this process could only provide a crude sketch of the contours of electoral support across the constituency because the accuracy of this mock count varied depending on the age, ability and eyesight of individual political activists. Most of the Tories present were very elderly and were easily distracted from a task, particularly if they were struggling to 'see' ballot papers. Members of the Core Campaign Team were very frustrated. At one point, one senior Tory Party activist asked me to interrupt a conversation that was taking place between three or four elderly political activists while a crucial ballot box opened in front of them – to which they were completely oblivious.

The first boxes arrived shortly after ten o'clock. As Police and security escorted them into the building, the Returning Officer announced that these boxes had come from Polling Stations in or near Dumfries and that others would continue to arrive

during the night. The Polling Station at Drummore – some eighty miles from Dumfries, in the far West of rural Galloway – would be the last box to arrive, around midnight. He also took this opportunity to introduce a group of half a dozen or so middle-aged men in leather jackets, who were mingling at the edge of the room. These were Albanian Polling Officials who had come to observe the Count. As he explained that he hoped those present would make them feel welcome, one political activist leaned over to me and whispered: ‘I wouldn’t like to meet one of those individuals in a dark alley.’

The boxes were checked and verified out of view of the Counting Agents before being distributed and emptied at various tables. I stood talking to a local BBC radio journalist, who had asked me what kind of result I anticipated that evening. Conscious of those Conservative Party activists nearest to me, I said that I thought the result was too close to call but that the political story of the night might be one of a Tory revival in Southwest Scotland. Meanwhile, a political activist standing next to me declared – not for the first time – that ‘Elaine Murray was finished’ and that David Mundell would win ‘by 3,000 votes.’

Whatever Mr Mundell’s feelings about his chances of winning, other political activists – including several Liberal Democrats and Scottish Nationalists – seemed to think he would probably lose. These views were consistent with earlier assertions that I had heard, that the local Labour MSP had been ‘assiduous’ and, as a result, was unlikely to lose her Parliamentary seat. On a previous occasion, one local Labour Party activist explained to me that a Member of Parliament ‘would really have to do something wrong to lose their seat’, which meant that in his view Dr Murray would probably be re-elected.

Around this time, a cohort of local Labour Party activists arrived en masse and the mood of some Conservative Party activists darkened as a result. Counting Agents for all political Parties moved towards the tables where Polling Officials had started opening boxes. The first of these were from Georgetown, which key Conservative Party strategists were keen to see. After scratching down some notes while these boxes were sorted, the figures looked potentially promising: the Tories were down 3:2. There were additional encouraging signs when some of the other boxes were opened – including that for Beattock, which those who had attended the McDonalds breakfast meeting at the beginning of this chapter were desperate to watch.

Just after midnight, there was some anticipation that a result was imminent for the Dumfries constituency. However, many Conservative Party activists looked stressed and emotional; it certainly seemed that most political activists had lost the enthusiasm they had felt earlier that day, propelled by a sense of prospective momentum. David Mundell looked distracted as talked to the Returning Officer on the other side of the Hall; it seemed likely that the Scottish Conservatives had, once again, ‘fallen behind.’ Then, one political activist told me that ‘there’s only 500 votes in it’ but no one knew who was ahead. The solemn and attentive faces of local Labour Party activists seemed to confirm this observation. Furthermore, Elaine Murray – talking to the Returning Officer along with David Mundell – appeared to be wiping away tears¹⁵⁰.

A few minutes later, however, the various candidates for the Dumfries constituency approached the stage at the front of the Hall. Standing behind the Returning Officer, David Mundell clutched his wife’s hand as she fought back her own tears. The

¹⁵⁰ David later explained that when the Returning Officer had told them that there was a 500-vote difference between the two candidates, she had assumed that she had lost and burst into tears.

fears of local Conservatives were confirmed when the Returning Officer read out the number of votes cast for each candidate; Dr Murray had won the Dumfries constituency. All traces of their earlier solemnity now gone, local Labour Party activists roared with celebration as the result was declared. As David Mundell took the microphone to concede defeat, some more vocal Labour Party activists started heckling him. Nonplussed, he congratulated Dr Murray on her victory and thanked his supporters. Then, he asserted that the result in the Dumfries constituency a 'huge success' for local Conservatives, who had secured a 10% swing against the incumbent Labour Party.

Although many of David Mundell's supporters were obviously disappointed, attention quickly turned to the count in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale. Within minutes of the declaration of the vote in the Dumfries constituency, mutterings spread that the result in the neighbouring constituency was 'too close to call'. Both Conservatives and Scottish Nationalists looked pensive. The SNP Parliamentary Researcher who had been dismissive about Alex Fergusson during his conversation with me the previous day now seemed worried. Even the curiosity of some local Labour Party activists had been aroused by what was unfolding on the other side of the room, in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale.

I walked over to Alex Fergusson, who was standing with a small group of political activists. I asked him whether he had any information. 'I'm about 100 votes ahead,' he said, clearly agitated and excited at the same time. 'There's going to be a re-count.'

At this time, both the Conservative MP Peter Duncan and David Mundell were rallying Conservative Party Counting Agents around the tables. 'It's close and there's going to be a re-count,' one political activist reiterated to me. 'We're going to have to watch every ballot paper – because they [SNP Counting Agents] will be watching ours.'

At that moment, the Returning Officer was issuing instructions to the various Polling Officials who were tasked with resorting the ballot papers ahead of a recount. He explained that they needed to check every ballot paper in every bundle to be sure that they had not accidentally missed any 'spoiled' ballot papers. They would then need to recount each bundle to make sure that each one consisted of exactly 100 ballot papers. Baskets of bundled papers were then distributed along the tables in a more methodical fashion than had occurred earlier that night when the boxes had been first opened. As they were resorted, one Polling Official 'found' a stray basket containing a lone bundle of ballot papers. After conferring with the Returning Officer, this stray bundle was then added to the large pile of vote for the incumbent SNP candidates. With a margin of now just nine votes, the stakes for the local Conservative Party activists grew much higher as the possibility of suffering a narrow defeat in neighbouring Galloway and Upper Nithsdale increased.

The Polling Officials carefully resorted and recounted the ballot papers in each bundle, Conservative and SNP Counting Agents watched obsessively over their shoulders. The Hall was quiet and tense; even Labour Party and other political activists were transfixed by the count. Every now and then, a 'spoiled' ballot paper that had been included in the initial count would be found and discarded. Almost as frequently, a ballot

paper found in the pile of several hundred votes for the Scottish Socialist Party would then be added to the SNP. For about twenty tense minutes, the margin seemed to grow and diminish by a handful of votes as the recount continued. Then, another Polling Official discovered another stray tray with another stray bundle of ballot papers in it. The candidates conferred again with the Returning Officer, this time for several minutes. Political activists watched from a distance, trying to read something of significance into their facial expressions. The Scottish Nationalists' Alasdair Morgan looked worried while Alex Fergusson appeared stony-faced. Wandering back in my direction, his expression did not change. However, behind him the Returning Officer add the stray bundle to Alex Fergusson's pile of ballot papers.

From their shell-shocked expressions, it was apparent from the faces of local SNP activists that they were giving up hope. The final tally saw Alex Fergusson win the constituency by 99 votes. In a victorious speech following the declaration of the vote, Alex Fergusson claimed that the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale constituency had rejected SNP representation after only one term in the Scottish Parliament – as they had after one term in the 1979 and 2001 General Elections. Alasdair Morgan, visibly shocked by the result, retorted that as a newly elected Regional List MSP for the South of Scotland, he would spend the next four years shadowing Alex Fergusson in his old Parliamentary constituency – just as the local Tory candidate had done when the Scottish Nationalists previously represented Galloway and Upper Nithsdale.

There were even more surprising results for local Conservatives the following day, when ballot papers for the local Council elections were counted. On a high turnout, local Tories had won a greater share of the vote – 31% – than any other political Party.

They were re-elected in the nine Council Wards they had held before Polling Day, with increased majorities in eight of them¹⁵¹. However, in spite of all their efforts throughout the previous months, they only won two more Council Wards – including Moffat – as only a handful changed hands across the entire region. As one Tory Party activist observed as soon as the results of the local Council election were known, it appeared that despite their earlier impressions, the electoral momentum had, in fact, been behind the Rainbow Alliance Administration all along. ‘We would have run our campaign very differently had we known that,’ he asserted. Then – almost as if an afterthought – it was announced that David Mundell had been re-elected to the Scottish Parliament through the South of Scotland Regional List.

Counting on Failure

I began this chapter with a question with which Conservative Party activists had to grapple: how does one know one’s efforts have made a difference? Local Tories looked to Polling Day for answers, observing their political opponents (cf. Jean-Klein 2002) and then trying to ‘read’ the counting of the ballot papers in such a way as to carry out a mock ‘audit’ (Strathern 2000) of their own campaign and support base. The important point to take from the above material is that whatever methods local Conservative Party strategists devised for assessing ‘progress’ – both in terms of their campaign’s internal mechanics as well as its external effects (cf. Riles 2001) – they were all discarded on Polling Day. Instead, old anxieties returned as the elections produced results that had not been anticipated, which many local Conservative Party activists found unsettling.

¹⁵¹ In one Council Ward – Thornhill – the local Tory Councillor was nominated without any opposition at all; he was automatically re-elected.

In the explanations that came after Polling Day for why local Conservatives did not perform as well as they had hoped, one metaphor – the weather – came to stand for the uncertainties of the entire process. Indeed, one senior political activist simply declared that if the rain had continued to fall into the evening, David Mundell would have won the Dumfries constituency because ‘Labour voters come out at night.’ This explanation seemed particularly appropriate to political activists given that by lunchtime on Polling Day, those involved in the telephone ‘knock up’ felt that most of their pledged support had already voted. At that moment, it could therefore be suggested that local Tories had forged ‘ahead’ of the local Labour Party, which struggled to ‘catch up’ – that is, until the rain stopped and the skies cleared. For Conservative Party activists, Polling Day was marked by a sense of losing the very prospective momentum (cf. Miyazaki 2003) that had been generated in the months before the elections. Furthermore, the Count itself failed to produce answers to the question of whether they had been able to make a difference at all.

Epilogue

Chapter Eight

Return of the lesser-spotted Tory

From participant observer to political insider

‘[The] modern world, like revolutions, permits scarcely anything more than small extensions of practices, slight acceleration in the circulation of knowledge, a tiny extension of societies, minuscule increases in the number of actors, small modifications of old beliefs. When we see them as networks, Western innovations remain recognizable and important, but they no longer suffice as the stuff of sage, a vast saga of radical rupture, fatal destiny, irreversible good or bad fortune.’

Bruno Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993:48)

This thesis concludes with the conundrum with which I began: where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge? I will briefly sketch some of the incidents that took place in the aftermath of the Election – including the publication of new Boundary Commission proposals – before asking of political activists: what, if anything, had changed? With much resting on the reading of a letter published in a local newspaper, or a few words exchanged in a car on the way to a Party function, these questions exposed the very uncertain and sketchy ground on which anthropologists and political activists alike make deductions about ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’. Furthermore, I argue that the difficulties political activists encounter in identifying the difference between what might be considered ‘old’ and ‘new’ are also mirrored in some of the recent anthropological literature focused on ‘new’ ethnographic objects. Moving between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, then, is a means of generating prospective momentum (Miyazaki 2003) – in the knowledge making practices of both anthropologists and

political activists. It is in this movement of making explicit what previously remained implicit (cf. Edwards 2000, Riles 2000, Strathern 1991, 1999) – and vice versa – that various kinds of knowledge derive a sense of relevance and vitality, for the anthropologist and the political activist alike.

Tories Bounce Back

A handful of the Conservative Party activists who had observed the counting of the Council ballot papers at Loreburn Hall returned to the office in Castle Street afterwards. Amongst those present were a couple of unsuccessful candidates for the local Council as well as the Tory Councillor Ivor Hyslop, who had been re-elected with an increased majority. Several members of staff and other volunteers were also present, as were Alan M., David Mundell and one of his sons. However, a number of key Conservative Party strategists – including Peter Duncan MP and Alex Fergusson MSP – had gone home instead, no doubt to relax and recover after a couple of stressful days with very little sleep.

Ostensibly a quiet ‘celebration’ following the elections, the mood of the gathering was reflective. One candidate clearly seemed disappointed that he had not won his Council Ward, although he remained in typically good *fettle* (spirit). Alan M. kept disappearing to his room to answer the telephone but was similarly subdued. Meanwhile, David Mundell looked relieved to have retained his seat in the Scottish Parliament. Given the emotion-charged weeks that had preceded Polling Day – and what for these political activists were the equally stressful events of the day itself and the counting of the ballot papers afterwards – everyone seemed a little deflated. Furthermore, they all

appeared uncertain about whether the local Conservative Party could be said to have won an important victory or endured a defeat.

Wine and champagne were opened and a number of political activists became more talkative after an alcoholic beverage (or two). Events and observations from the previous two days were discussed while humorous stories from the campaign itself were recounted. David's son re-told the story of how political activists had found a report during the campaign in the *Courier* that claimed 'the impartiality' of a local shopping centre 'had been breached' during the election hilarious. Others seemed to find this story a little bemusing.

As political activists broke into small groups and conversations, David Mundell and I discussed the result in the local Council election as well as his own result in the Dumfries constituency in some more detail. Surprised that local Conservatives had not won more than eleven Council Wards, he felt able to make a few, initial observations. Firstly, Independent candidates had 'cost' local Conservatives victory in several key 'target Wards; the fight to 'wipe the Independents off the political map' and change the political culture of local politics would have to begin in earnest. Secondly, the election of the two successful Conservative candidates to local Council would serve as a lesson to all Council candidates in the future that only through hard work and establishing their 'local' credentials early can one be sure of success. But clearly, David Mundell felt that local Conservatives probably miscalculated on some key questions of strategy. Most importantly, there did not appear, in retrospect, to be much of an appetite amongst 'local people' to vote out the 'Rainbow Alliance' Administration of Independents, Labour

Party, Liberal Democrat and SNP councillors. ‘Had we known the mood was not with us,’ he said, ‘I think we might have run things very differently.’

Having just held on to his seat in the Scottish Parliament, David Mundell seemed to be turning over other possibilities in his mind. Indeed, had Polling Stations closed earlier on 1 May, he speculated that he might have won ‘because Tory supporters had come out and voted by the end of the morning’:

‘When the sun came out around 4 o’clock in the afternoon, I knew I had lost. The Labour Party get their vote out in the evening, so the election was there for them to win.’

Having secured a swing to the Scottish Conservatives of almost 10%, however, he had achieved the best swing to the Scottish Conservatives anywhere in that election¹⁵². Potentially, there was much mileage that he personally – and local Conservatives collectively – could extract from this result. However, it seemed that David Mundell was thinking about other, new possibilities and challenges. ‘I think it might be time for me and Russell Brown to go head to head,’ he said, which suggested to me that he had begun to contemplate putting himself forward as a candidate in Dumfries at the next General Election. ‘The more I think about this result, the more I think it might have a real upside.’

A short while later, a political activist brought into the room a copy of that evening’s *Courier*, which had just been delivered to the office. It was the first local newspaper to publish any coverage of the local election results, which were summed up with a simple

headline on the front page proclaiming: ‘Tories Bounce Back.’ Upon reading this headline, the mood of the political activists present brightened considerably.

‘It’s a good headline – and a great result for Alex,’ observed David Mundell. ‘And if Alex had not been elected in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, I may not have been either.’ Then, turning to me, he added:

‘Congratulations. You made a difference.’

Ironically, in a tight contest in which the local Conservatives defeated the SNP in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale by just 99 votes¹⁵³, it was possible to argue that everyone – indeed, everything – had made a difference. Even the rumours that some key Labour Party activists had tactically voted for Alex Fergusson in a bid to ‘wipe the SNP off the map of Southwest Scotland’ had to be taken seriously. It was entirely possible, according to some political activists, that tactical voting from anti-Nationalist Labour Party activists in Dumfries had probably made a difference too. However, in their post-election analysis – which would take several weeks of private conversations and group discussions between political activists the length and breadth of Dumfries and Galloway (and even beyond) – it was impossible for political activists to decide which factors and issues most contributed to their success.

¹⁵² Indeed, this swing was greater than where the Scottish Tories won first-past-the-post seats in Ayr, Edinburgh Pentland as well as Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (cf. Burnside et al 2003).

¹⁵³ The result in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale was: Alex Fergusson (Conservative) – 11,332 votes (38.2%); Alasdair Morgan (SNP) – 11,233 votes (37.9%); Norma Hart (Labour) – 4,299 votes (14.5%); Neil Wallace (Liberal Democrat) – 1,847 votes (6.2%); Joy Cherkaoui (Scottish Socialist Party) – 709 votes (2.4%); Graham Brockhouse (Scottish People’s Alliance) – 215 votes (0.7%).

In my own analysis, I eventually came to acknowledge the impossibility of identifying what instruments and issues were ‘decisive’ in the election of Alex Fergusson MSP and the ‘defeat’ of David Mundell in the Dumfries constituency. All factors – no matter how small – appeared to have been decisive and all factors appeared to have been as decisive as each other. It was, then, impossible to build a picture of factors that were more important than others; there were no levels, or hierarchies, between the issues: just apparent discursive ‘equals’ in ‘a parliament of things’ (Latour 1993). Here, knowledge – and analysis – failed. Like the workshop participants I encountered eighteen months earlier who were embroiled in debate about FMD recovery in Dumfries and Galloway, analysis failed to emerge, reduced (as it was) to a question that did not demand an answer.

Conversely, reflecting on what issues made a difference in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale invited further reflection amongst political activists on what did not work in the Dumfries constituency. This would prove an even more troublesome exercise given that so much activity had been replicated across the region and the Scottish Parliament campaigns had both been deeply implicated with the local Council campaign. Some blamed the weather on Polling Day; others pointed out that the Scottish Nationalist and Liberal Democrat campaigns had completely collapsed. This meant that the SNP had not played the vital role in siphoning electoral support from the Labour Party on issues like the Iraq war and the fire fighters’ strike. Furthermore, some political activists looked to blame the Core Campaign Team and some of the perceived ‘management’ failures of the last ten days – for which the breaking down of the riso-graph had become symbolic. It was also impossible for Conservative Party activists to make any kind of judgment as to

whether there had been much of a contribution to their otherwise strong performance from SNP supporters voting tactically against the Labour Party¹⁵⁴.

Losing by a little over 1000 votes in the Dumfries constituency, it was very difficult for local Tory Party activists to work out what – if anything – could have made (up) the difference. In a conversation with David Mundell a few days later, he explained to me that he thought a better-organised Conservative Party campaign could have helped them squeeze another 500 votes out of the Dumfries constituency:

‘But I am quite clear that we did everything we possibly could to win, so the result would not have changed.’

As in the Tories’ success in the neighbouring constituency of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, the ground on which any kind of political analysis could be based ultimately remained unknowable.

Return of the lesser-spotted Tory

On Thursday, 8 May – one week after Polling Day – *The Galloway News* published the following letter from a Scottish Nationalist supporter in Kirkcudbright in which she asked:

Why, oh why do the people of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale feel so akin to the policies of the Conservative party? Do they not realise what letting the Tories in

¹⁵⁴ The Conservative Party increased its vote in Dumfries by almost 10% – by far the largest swing to the Tories in any constituency in Scotland. However, this result could be explained almost entirely by a collapse in support for the local SNP and Liberal Democrats. The results were: Elaine Murray (Labour) – 12,834 votes (40%); David Mundell (Conservative) – 11,738 votes (36.6%); Andrew Wood (SNP) – 3,931 votes (12.2%); Clare Hamblen (Liberal Democrat) – 2,394 votes (7.5%); John Dennis (Scottish Socialist Party) – 1,213 votes (3.8%).

wholesale [sic] would mean? They would privatise your health services, leaving the less well off to get their hospital care in a second rate service. And they would make the rest of you pay through the nose.

Furthermore, the election of a Conservative MSP in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale amounted to nothing more than a return to the way things had always been (*ae been*) – a perpetuation of Tory hegemony, in fact:

It's time people woke up and realised what they are voting for. Take an interest. And not just vote for what their fathers and grandfathers believed in. People have no right to moan if they are willing to elect a man who stands for a party that represents old money and old beliefs. It's time to think about what is REALLY needed in Galloway. And it certainly isn't a Tory MSP.

Printed seven days after the election, this letter read like a lament (cf. Das 1995). Had it appeared before Polling Day, it might have constituted a passionate attempt to persuade local people to avoid 'returning' to a discredited, Tory past (cf. Fabian 1983). However, the idea that the local Tories 'had bounced back' or 'returned' was prevalent. In the days that followed, a young academic at the Crichton University Campus congratulated me on the success of the local Conservative Party. 'I don't know why you're congratulating me,' I said. 'It was their success, and I thought you voted Scottish Socialist or something.'

'I'm sure you had a hand in it,' he said, mischievously:

'And anyway, now we can return to the natural order of things. Everyone needs a nemesis – like Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty. It's better to have the Tories back in Scotland. It's like welcoming back an auld enemy – now we know whom to hate.'

In the pub with a Labour Party activist a week later, one of his 'Tory friends' – a retired fire master – said he was pleased with the result of the Scottish Parliament election. 'That was a good result,' he whispered to me, conspiratorially. 'Things seem to be moving back in the right direction.'

Around the same time, negotiations commenced between Tory Councillors and other political Parties eager to form a new Council Administration. These negotiations continued against the advice of senior Conservative Party strategists, who reminded local Councillors of an earlier decision – taken by the Core Campaign Team – not to enter an Administration unless at least fifteen local Conservatives were elected. Instead, a new 'Rainbow Alliance' Administration formed, this time led by Independents with the support of the Tory Council Group while the local Labour Party were excluded. On brokering the new arrangements, one Tory Councillor declared excitedly:

'We did it! We changed the Council!'

Meanwhile, on 26 June 2003, the Boundary Commission for Scotland published a notice detailing revised boundaries for Parliamentary constituencies in southern Scotland. It also released copies of the report the Assistant Commissioner at the public inquiry in Dumfries had provided the Boundary Commission, as well as a copy of the transcript of that inquiry. The Boundary Commission decided to persist with its plans to abolish the Dumfries constituency. However, it agreed to keep the two Council Wards in Northeast Dumfries with the rest of the Town in the new Parliamentary seat of Dumfries and Galloway. These two Wards were 'traded' for another two – Nithsdale East and Caerlaverock – which now ended up in the newly renamed Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and

Tweeddale (DCT) constituency. The Boundary received approximately 700 objections to the new boundary, including many from Labour Party activists. This time, though, Provost Cameron and his supporters in Northeast Dumfries offered no comments to local newspapers, whether or not these new proposals would ‘tear the heart out of *oor toon*’. Nor did the local Conservative Party organise any submissions; as one senior Conservative Party activist explained, they had ‘nothing more to say’ about the new boundaries.

From participant observer to political insider

At the beginning of this thesis, I said that one of the questions I asked myself from time to time during my fieldwork was whether or not politicking and electioneering constituted a ‘new’ ethnographic object? This seemed a useful way for me to think about the tension between what remained in the background of my research as I focused on what had been brought to the foreground (cf. Edwards 2000, Strathern 1991). This question also highlighted the significance to my own research of a growing scholarship on the anthropology of modern knowledge practices (e.g. Coutin 2005; Dahl 2004; Jean-Klein 2000, 2002, 2003; Levine 2004, Maurer 2002, 2005; Miyazaki 2003; Riles 1996, 1998, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005; Strathern 1995b, 1999, 2000). However, I also said that this thesis constituted a kind of ethnographic journey (cf. Coutin 2005) on which I embarked in order to answer the question: where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge? I will now briefly recount that journey.

Chapter Two outlined my field site as I encountered it in the aftermath of two crises: the Foot and Mouth epidemic and the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

Here, I drew on the work of Veena Das (1995) and Annelise Riles (2003a) to consider how a notion of critical event or crisis can constitute an object of knowledge, for both the anthropologist and the would-be political activist. I argued that by making crisis an analytical object, one can make an incision upon complex cultural phenomena that otherwise resists representation (cf. Riles 1996, 1998, 2001) before asking: how is a notion of crisis put to work, by whom and with what (political) effects?

In Chapter Three, I focused on another ‘source’ of knowledge, of which there seemed a disproportionate number in Dumfries and Galloway: local newspapers. Taking up a challenge posed by Lisa Malkki (1995) to address an alleged ‘distance’ between anthropological and journalistic knowledge making practices, I surveyed local newspaper coverage of the Boundary Commission’s controversial proposals to re-draw Parliamentary constituencies within the region. In the process, I argued this example demonstrated that not just that journalistic knowledge is potentially constitutive of anthropological knowledge. The boundary between journalism and political activism is also blurred, especially when *Dumfriesshire Newspapers* launched its own campaign against the proposed changes. To think through these entanglements between the anthropologist, local journalists and political activists, I turned to Wittgenstein’s idea of the language game (Brand 1979, Das 1998) before extending these observations in Chapter Four, which explored the evidence presented to a public inquiry regarding the Boundary Commission’s proposals. During the inquiry, it remained unclear what evidence or criteria would be considered ‘relevant’ to deciding whether or not the Boundary Commission would heed local opposition to its proposals. As a result, political activists framed their arguments in terms with which they were familiar that served to

highlight the complex and hybrid nature of knowledge and social relations (cf. Edwards 2000).

In Chapter Five, I turned to focus on ‘the lesser-spotted Tory’. I analysed the knowledge practices of local Conservatives as they organised for the Scottish Parliament and local Council elections held on 1 May 2003. As I argued in Chapter Five, Scottish Conservatives are notable partly because of their ‘absence’ (cf. Coutin 2005) from popular narratives about contemporary Scotland (Hearn 2000, 2002) that equate political ‘progress’ with the successful campaign for a Scottish Parliament – which most Conservatives opposed. Ironically, with some Tories elected to the new Parliament, the Scottish Conservatives were sometimes said to have re-appeared ‘on the radar’, although local Tory strategists agreed that, politically, they had ‘fallen behind’ other political Parties in Scotland. They were presented, then, with the challenge of organising a ‘modern’ political campaign that would enable them to build the kind of prospective momentum (cf. Levine 2004, Miyazaki 2003) that would allow them to ‘catch up’ with – and overtake – the local Labour Party. In this chapter, I used Tory Party activist discursive objects/artefacts – namely, an agenda and two spreadsheets, which disciplined discussions of the Core Campaign Team as it met between January and May 2003 – as a focus for my own analysis.

Chapter Six returned to my discussion from Chapter Four regarding the hybrid nature of knowledge as I analysed a number of ‘instruments’ (cf. Riles 2001, 2003b) that local Conservative Party activists hoped would persuade local people to vote for them in the coming Poll. These instruments included the survey, the press release, the leaflet and the target letter – all considered vital tools in the local Conservative Party’s discursive

armoury. I argued that addressing logistical and organisational questions – that is, activist methodology – in the production of these instruments in many ways mattered more to political activists than the ‘issues’ on which they intended to campaign. Indeed, local ‘issues’ better resembled intellectual ‘puzzles’ in a Kuhn-inspired sense (1962, 1977); they were ‘found’ or ‘produced’ as artefacts or contrivances of activist labour and were primarily concerned with demonstrating ‘relevance’ and the ability to ‘make (a) difference’ to ‘local people’.

This discussion continued into Chapter Seven, which dealt with another question with which political activists had to contend: how does one know one’s efforts have made a difference? Mindful of recent work on auditing and political observation (e.g. Jean-Klein 2003, Strathern 2000), I outlined some of the methods that local Conservative Party strategists developed for assessing ‘progress’. These methods were designed to produce a view of the Conservative Party campaign both in terms of its internal mechanics and its external effects (cf. Riles 2000). However, focusing on Polling Day and the Election Count that followed, I argued that the various strategies local Tory Party activists used to ‘read’ what was happening around them produced were quickly discarded or forgotten because they failed. After all, the elections contained some surprising – and potentially unsettling – results for local Conservative Party activists, not least because of their inability to predict the result in the light of all sorts of diverse factors – such as the weather. In the end, Polling Day was marked for local Conservatives by a sense that prospective momentum had been lost because, after all their anticipation, it failed to deliver them the results for which they hoped or the local ‘knowledge’ that they coveted.

So where does one go to locate relevant political action and knowledge? I want to offer a provisional answer: somewhere else. Prospective momentum, as we have seen, is generated when there is a sense of incongruity – a mismatch – in terms of where one is located, both in space and time. Such incongruity leads political activists and anthropologists alike to look ‘elsewhere’ for the ‘knowledge’ they have somehow ‘missed’. In other words, we look somewhere else for relevant political action and knowledge in order to ‘plug the gaps’ in what we know. It is the movement between what is made explicit and what remains implicit that is important in generating that sense of momentum.

When I arrived in Dumfries and Galloway to begin my fieldwork, I tried to maintain links into all political groups in order to address the wider questions that were (then) central to my study. However, I became aware that – like some of the Conservative Party activists who provided me with the information on which much of the above ethnography is based – I was just another individual trying to make sense of what was happening politically in post-devolution Scotland. During their campaign, local Conservative Party activists would occasionally ask me for ‘an objective view’ about their chances. After a few weeks, my advice became ‘semi-objective’ in their eyes until they stopped asking my opinion altogether. There are several possible and somewhat obvious reasons for the perceived change in my location (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1999) from the perspective of my Conservative Party informants. But the important point to highlight here is that the information on which I based my judgments about local politics in Dumfries and Galloway was gleaned using many of the same techniques that were also

at their disposal. I was not the only person studying local newspapers and discussing gossip picked up here and there in order to second-guess what was happening around me.

It was very reassuring to discover that by closely reading local newspapers, for example, I was engaging in a set of political practices in which my Conservative Party informants were similarly engaged. However, the exhilarating theoretical possibilities that might lie in pursuing such lines of inquiry were always mitigated by an uncertainty generated from these same practices. After all, what could an anthropologist contribute to an understanding of micro-local political change in rural Scotland that could not be gleaned from one of my more articulate and self-aware informants? At these moments, I wondered whether my own status as a 'participant observer' had in fact changed and whether I had become differently located: was I, at some point, a 'political insider'?

Some have argued that communities in Britain are 'less like each other than we may popularly suppose' (Cohen 1982:9). However, I am inclined to agree with Jeanette Edwards (2000:248) that 'the ways in which we conceptualize our social worlds and locate ourselves within them are much more alike than our constant strategies of differentiation would suggest.' I suggest this same point could be made of the knowledge practices of both the anthropologist and the would-be political activist described in this thesis. Indeed, this point seems especially relevant given that local Conservative Party activists often saw themselves as outsiders too (cf. Edwards 2000:20-21), in relation to dominant narratives about Scottish politics as well as local communities to which they felt the need to get back 'in touch'. Perhaps like anthropologists struggling to apprehend 'new' ethnographic objects, Conservative Party activists had to strain themselves in order to appear novel and different from their opponents.

Limits

In Chapter One, I suggested that I would analyse a ‘new’ ethnographic object: a political campaign fought for a Parliamentary election. I focused on a variety of political instruments that were deployed in relation to a number of small events and crises, one of the effects of which was to bring the Conservative Party campaign into view as an ethnographic object. This campaign could be said to possess a social life, which came to a quick and quiet end during the dying hours of Polling Day.

Some anthropologists might find a focus on political instruments – as I have called them – and small events somewhat frustrating. Not all anthropologists would recognise such instruments and events as sufficiently ethnographic, especially given that in focusing on such banal forms I have eschewed a more traditional, community-based approach to the anthropology of (rural) Britain that would have involved carrying out an in-depth ethnographic study of social relations in Dumfries and Galloway. What I wanted to generate through this analysis, though, was the sense in which such forms come to grip the imaginations of political activists through a kind of narrowing of focus. By concentrating on questions of form and activist methodology, as I discussed in Part Two, my informants could be said to have undergone a tunnelling of vision. In the process, the instruments discussed here are treated as if they can stand in for social relations. As a result, a leaflet like the *In Touch* described in Chapter Six is apprehended as a substitute for social relations, invoking in a very literal sense a set of connections between a person, a place and a political Party.

Whether or not such instruments actually produce the effects that political activists claim they do is another question entirely. Indeed, the evidence might well

suggest – to both the anthropologist and the would-be political activist – that such instruments produce effects that are, at best, difficult to quantify or, at worse, non-existent. This thesis makes no claims to being able to assess the impact of such instruments on a wider electorate. One of the clear limits to my emphasis on apprehending these instruments in the terms that activists sought to do so is that – from within the tunnelled, narrowed vision of the Core Campaign Team – one is left with little or no analytical space to treat them as non-activists might.

This is not to diminish the significance of these instruments for the political activists described in this thesis. After all, they retain considerable power to grip the imaginations of activists despite the scant evidence that they register any connection at all in the minds of non-activists. Political instruments are able to monopolise the work of political activists so that a whole series of small, quasi-bureaucratic events are imbued with greater significance than at first glance they might appear to warrant. One way of describing this thesis might be to say that it is an attempt to analyse the sociality that the local Conservative Party campaign generated. In so doing, I acknowledge both the fragility of the links Conservative Party activists made through their respective instruments, as well as the difficulty in extrapolating much from the above material that might be considered relevant to better understanding social relations in Dumfries and Galloway more generally. The point here, however, is that the limits of my analysis are also the apparently self-imposed limits of my informants themselves, as they apprehended their own instruments.

Further research

Strathern believes that social science has a 'regenerative capacity' to constantly 'build up the conditions from which the world can be apprehended anew' (Strathern 1988:19-20). However, I suggest that this capacity is equally available to the anthropologist and the would-be political activist. After all, In Dumfries and Galloway, Conservative Party activists and others continue to face uncertainties and anxieties about the future. These 'instabilities' undermine the attempts of anthropologists and political activists from engaging with 'the world as it is' (cf. Greenhouse 2003) although it does not stop us from necessarily treating the world as if it is something we know (if only we look elsewhere). Furthermore, these uncertainties and anxieties could form the basis of fascinating, new ethnographic research – in Scotland and beyond.

Since completing my fieldwork, two by-elections were held in Conservative-held Council Wards due to the resignation of Safa Ash-Kuri in Moffat and the death of Andrew Bell-Irving in Hoddum and Kinmount. The Tories won both of these Wards, although the former Independent Councillor for Moffat came close to victory there. A General Election has also been held on the new Parliamentary boundaries. In these elections, the Labour MP Russell Brown defeated the local Conservative MP Peter Duncan and now represents the new seat of Dumfries and Galloway. Local Conservatives selected David Mundell MSP as their candidate for the new DCT constituency, which he then went on to win in the 2005 General Election. The continuing mixed fortunes of the local Conservatives have thrown up the kinds of opportunities and challenges that have rarely been experienced as anything other than unsettling. As local Conservatives approach the 2007 Scottish Parliament elections, they face other

uncertainties surrounding the introduction of Proportional Representation into local Government elections. Again, local Conservative Party activists have to improvise and adapt to new electoral challenges.

As a result, it is not just the anthropologist who is potentially drawn back into a world of words, discourse and documents. Political activists must also engage with an endless stream of documents, financial statements, legislation, reports, newsletters and surveys as they, too, develop strategies for apprehending the changing political landscape. Meanwhile, they continue to find new ways of ‘finessing’ the instruments in their discursive arsenal: telephone canvassing, petitions, leafleting, readings of local newspapers and other media (including the internet) and political gossip. From this perspective, more might amplify the anxieties Conservative Party activists face in Dumfries and Galloway than just their marginal institutional location at the geographical periphery. The very inability of the discursive instruments they use to fully apprehend (predict) local and national politics might combine these other factors to further heighten their sense of uncertainty in contemporary Scottish politics.

Of course, it may not necessarily be the case that the marginal location of Tory Party activists in Scotland institutionally is unrelated to the fact that where they do appear ‘strong’ locally they are to be found at the country’s periphery, in places like Dumfries and Galloway. This may be no accident. One of the unanswered questions of this thesis remains whether the marginal status of my ethnographic subjects is a condition of their geographical and/or institutional location, or whether in fact others located closer to the political ‘centre’ share their anxieties and experiences as well? It is worth asking this question when one considers the fact that to the local Conservative Party activists studied

here, local politics seemed like 'business as usual' at the same time as they struggled to innovate; what was 'new' or 'different' about what they offered was not self-evidently so. As a result, one – both the would-be political activist and the anthropologist – had to strain oneself to make novelty and differences appear.

Figures

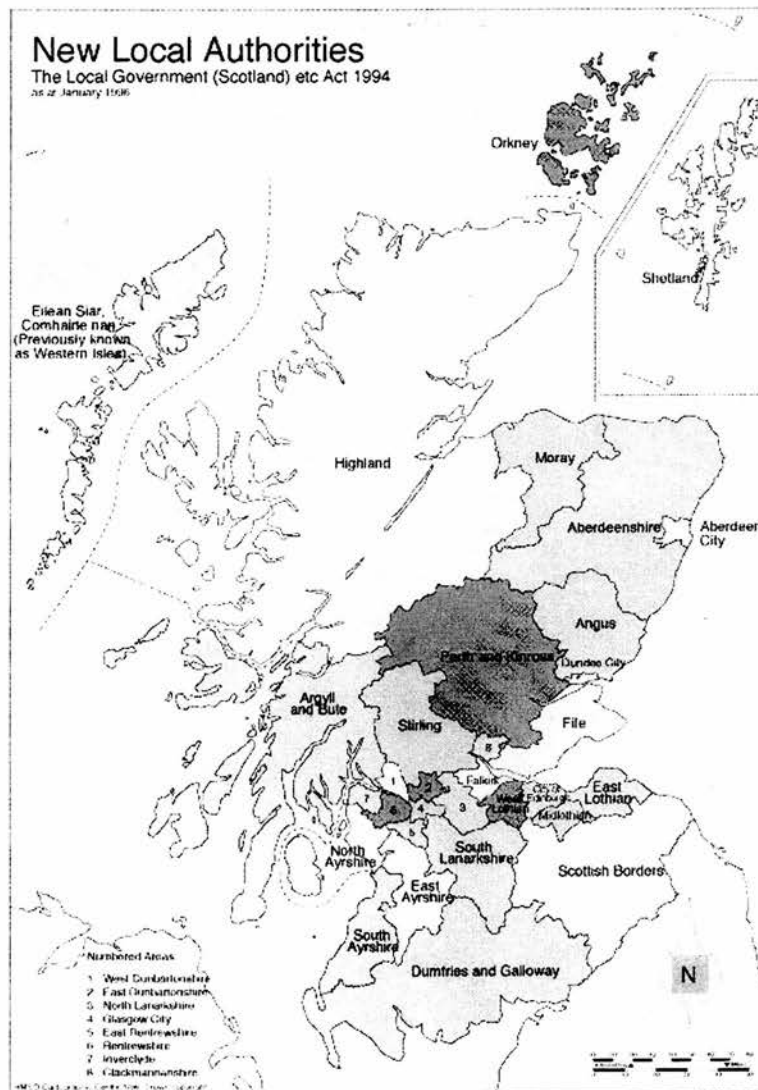


Figure 1 – Map of Scottish Local Authorities

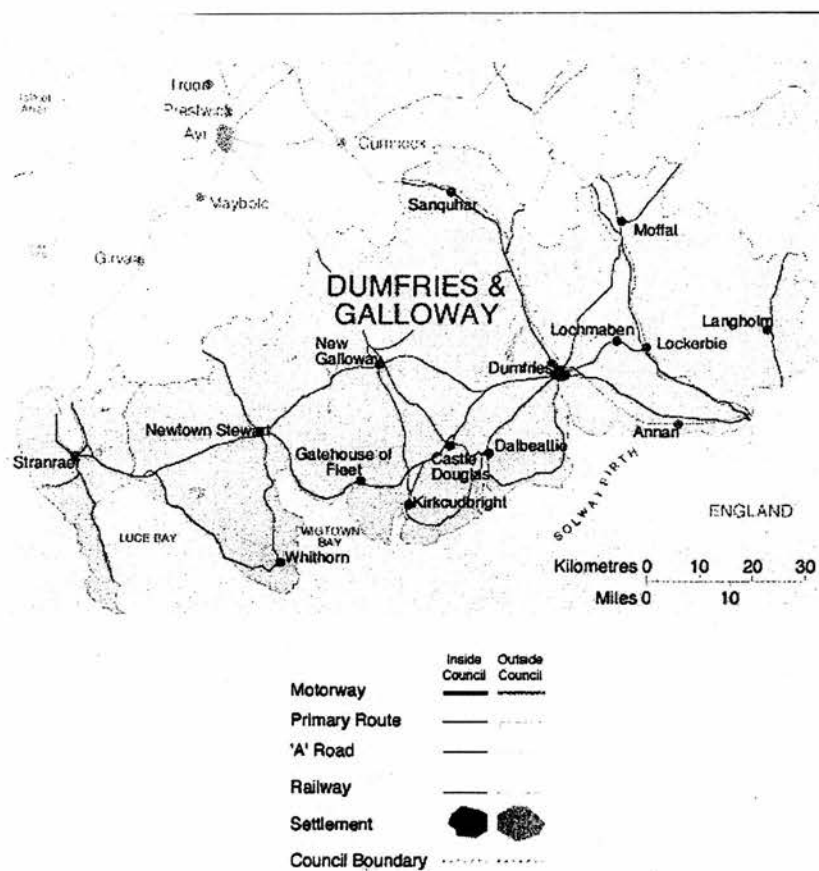


Figure 2 – Map of Dumfries and Galloway

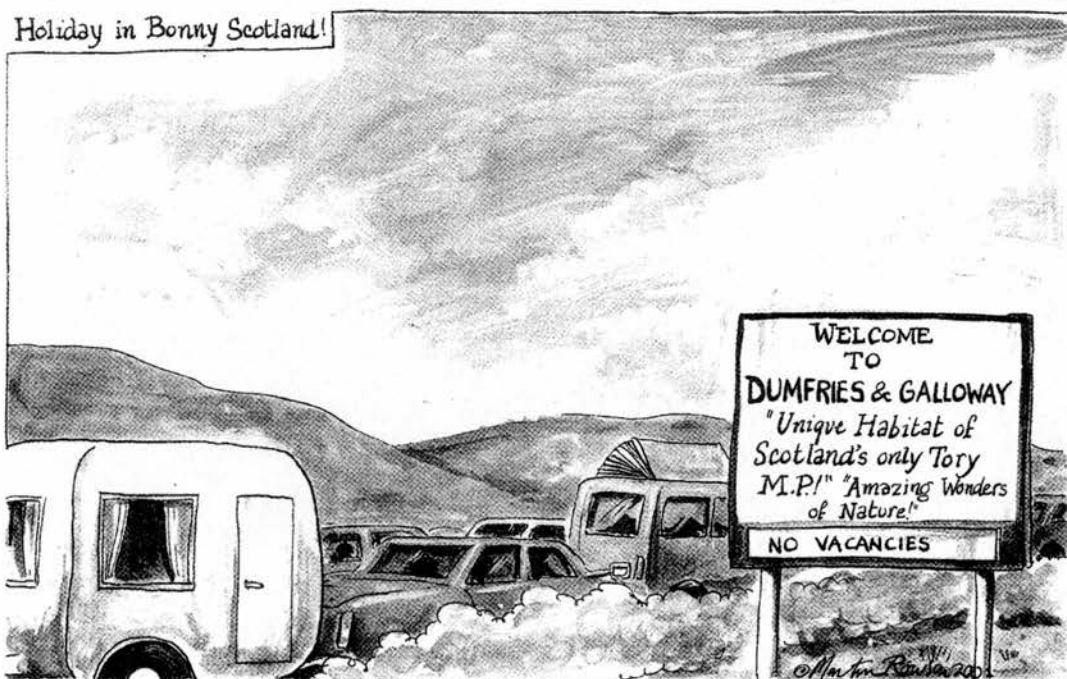


Figure 3 – 'Welcome to Dumfries and Galloway' (*The Scotsman*, 09/06/2001)

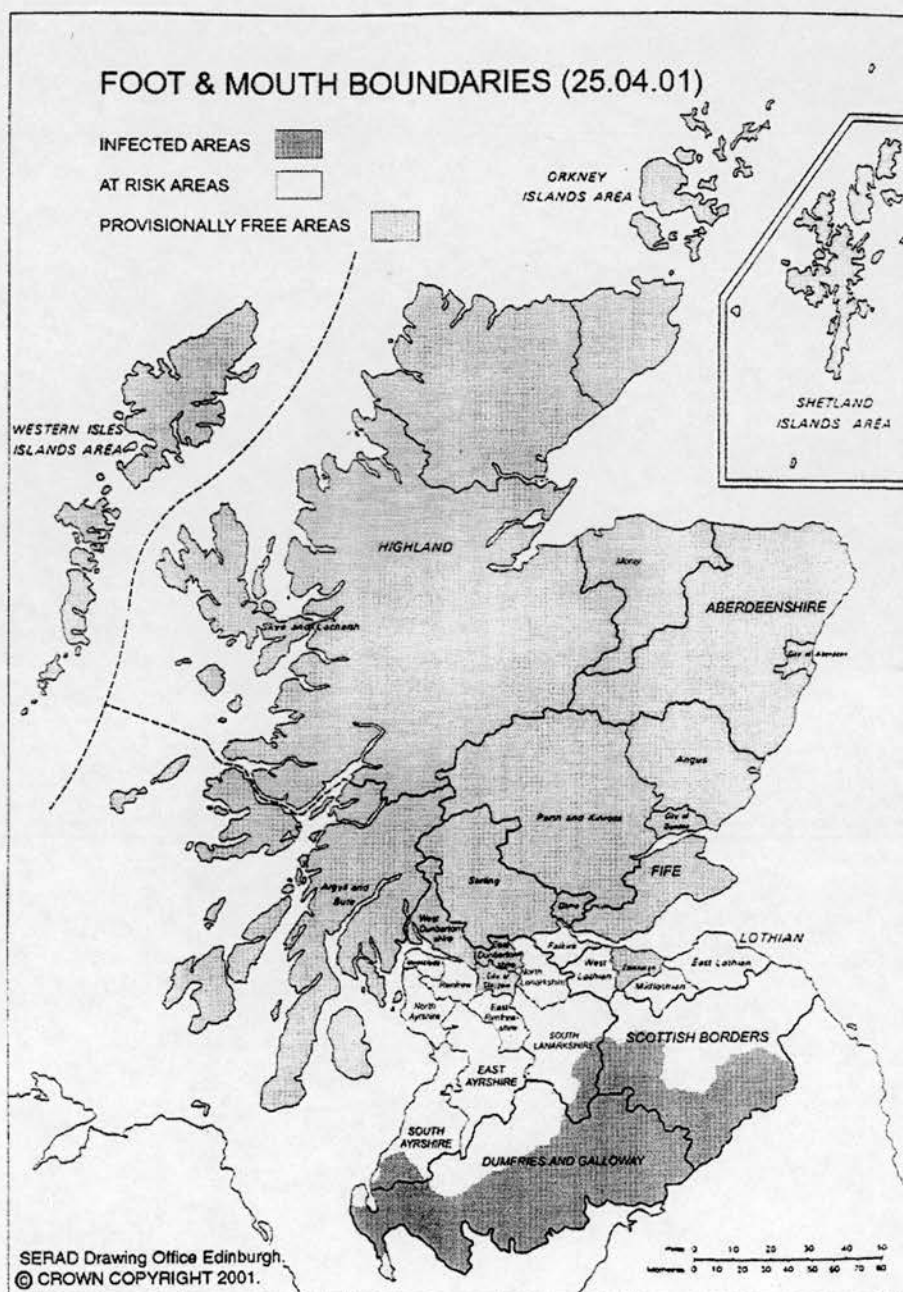
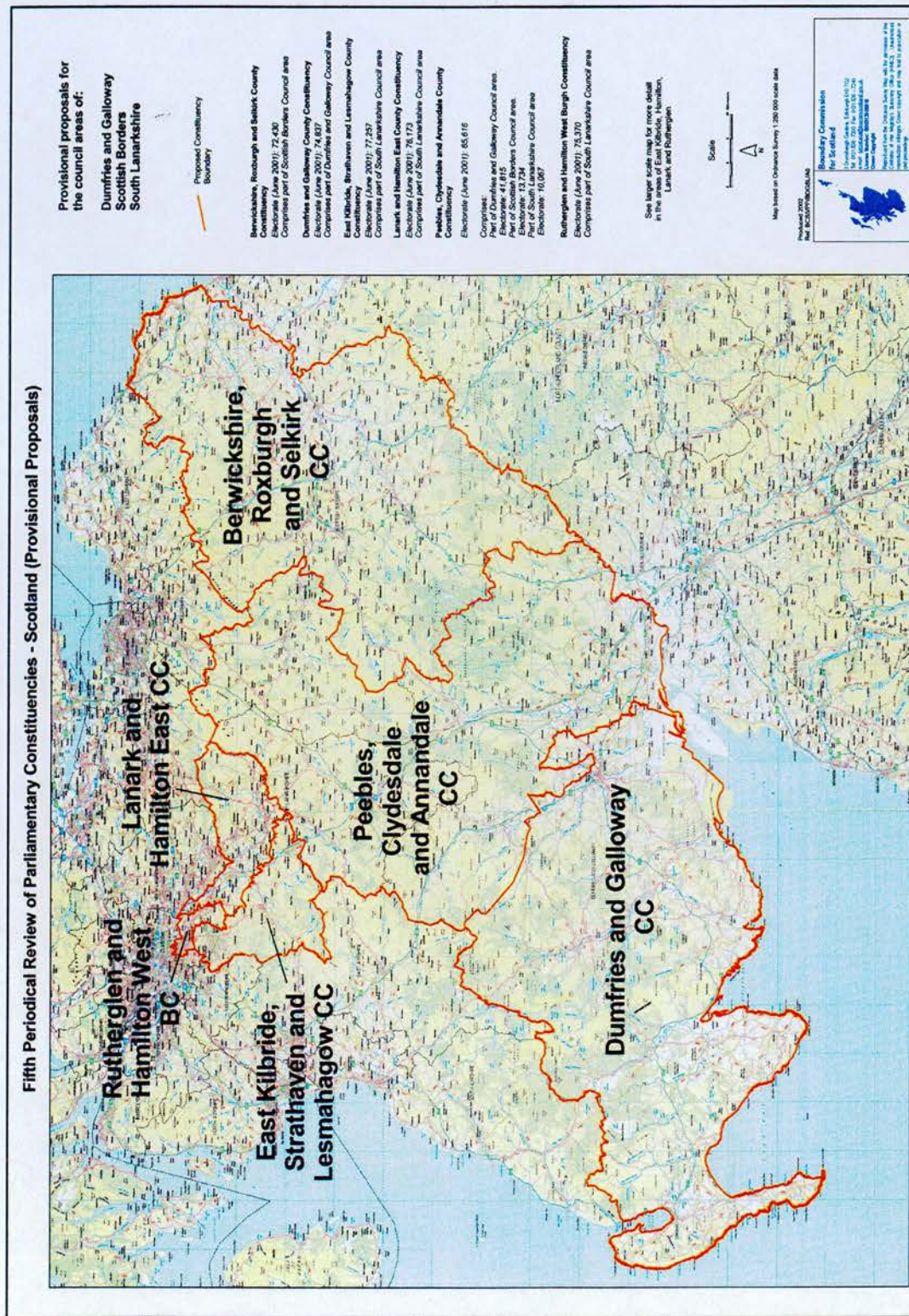


Figure 4 – Spread of Foot and Mouth Disease (25/04/2001)



Joint Council Campaign Team

**3rd Feb 2003
Dumfries Office 9am**

AGENDA

- 1) Candidates & Council Group**
 - a. Candidates update
 - b. Local manifesto commitments
- 2) Media & Message**
 - a. This week's messages
 - b. CV responsibility
 - c. Letter follow-ups
- 3) Literature & Leaflets**
 - a. Manifesto (and printing?)
 - b. Riso'd 4th leaflet
 - c. Calling cards
 - d. Stationery prices & supplies
 - i. Riso paper
 - ii. GOTV letter
- 4) Campaigns Briefing**
 - a. Campaign plan
 - b. Pledge targets
- 5) Meeting – 8th Feb**
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Format & section leaders

Figure 6 – Conservative Party Core Campaign Team agenda

Dumfries & Galloway Council Campaign

Campaign Plan

<u>D minus</u>	<u>G&UN MSP campaign</u>	<u>Joint Council Campaign</u>	<u>DFS MSP Campaign</u>	<u>Date equivalent</u>	
				from	to
80 - 70		Leaflet 3 - hand delivery		10-Feb	20-Feb
55 - 45		Riso'd leaflet 4 - hand delivery		05-Mar	15-Mar
30	Introductory leaflet - key wards	Riso'd leaflet 5 - key wards		01-Apr	01-Apr
29 - 25	Introductory leaflet - other wards	Riso'd leaflet 5 - other wards		02-Apr	06-Apr
18 - 14	1st Election Address - GPO		1st Election Address - GPO	13-Apr	17-Apr
14 - 10	MSP middle leaflet - key wards	Leaflet 6 - key wards	MSP middle leaflet - key wards	17-Apr	21-Apr
6 - 3	2nd Election Address - GPO		2nd Election Address - GPO	25-Apr	28-Apr
2 - 1	pledge letter delivery - post	GOTV letter - hand delivery	pledge letter delivery - post	29-Apr	30-Apr
1	eve of poll knock-up	eve of poll knock-up	eve of poll knock-up	30-Apr	30-Apr
0	polling day knock-up	polling day knock-up	polling day knock-up	01-May	01-May

Figure 7 – Conservative Party Campaign Plan (Dumfries and Galloway)

Council Candidates

WARD	Status	CANDIDATE	Pos CANDIDATE	OTHER REMARKS	BUDDY
1) RHINS SOUTH	1	John Enos			TONY 1
2) RHINS NORTH	1	John Dougan			TONY 1
3) STRANRAER NORTH	2B	Maureen McKinley			TONY
4) STRANRAER EAST	3		Billy Wallace		TONY
5) STRANRAER SOUTH	3	Mike Pemberton			TONY
6) WHITHORN	2B		Andy Shiells		TONY
7) WIGTOWN	2A	Sheila Stewart			TONY
8) LUCE	2A	Roberta Tuckfield			TONY
9) CREE	1			help!	TONY 1
10) STEWARTRY WEST	Cllr	Tony Gilbey			Cllr
11) KIRKUDBRIGHT-TARFF	Cllr	Patsy Gilroy			Cllr
12) KIRKUDBRIGHT-BENGAIRN	1		Douglas Swan	still swithering/Makin poss too	PATSY 1
13) STEWARTRY NORTH	1	Graham Watson			PATSY 1
14) CASTLE DOUGLAS-DEE	2B	Mungo Bryson			PATSY
15) CASTLE DOUGLAS-URR	1		Ian Smith?	quite good prospect	PATSY 1
16) DALBEATTIE-CRAIGNAIR	3	Renwick Leitch			PATSY
17) DALBEATTIE-MILTON	1			two possibles being persued	PATSY 1
18) CRIFFEL	1	Bruce Hodgson			IVOR 1
19) CAIRN VALLEY	Cllr	Allan Wright			Cllr
20) SANQHAR & DISTRICT	2A	Hugh Wright			ALLAN W1
21) KIRKCONNEL	3		Rog Wood		ALLAN W
22) MID NITHSDALE	Cllr	Neil McKay			Cllr
23) LINCLUDEN	3		Jack Oakes	John Telfer	NEIL
24) LOCHSIDE	3		Archie Wight		NEIL
25) PALMERSTON	3		Ted Murray	DM to approach again	NEIL
26) MAXWELLTOWN	2A	Graham Bell			ALLAN W1
27) TROQUEER	1	Hendry Williams		?	NEIL 1
28) LOREBURN	3	Sheena Dunlop			NEIL

05/01/2003

Figure 8 – Conservative Party candidates (Dumfries and Galloway Council)

Dumfries **COURIER**

Number 1307 - Week 12

VED The Largest Distribution Newspaper in South West Scotland **VED**

22,778 copies distributed and sold in South West Scotland every week (July 02-Dec. 02) Friday, 21 March, 2003 price 25p

SPECIAL OFFERS from Mitsubishi

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- 3 Years Warranty
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BORDERS CARS
Glasgow Road, Dumfries

● **LITTLE** Ross Lindsay, 2, from Dumfries was one of the youngest supporters at last night's protest



WAR DEMO CLASH

Report: Ashley Banks

THE LARGEST yet anti-war demonstration in the region took place in Dumfries town centre last night.

But the 100 activists, armed with placards, were sharply reminded that their views were not universally popular.

The protesters gathered at Burn's Statue and voiced their anger against the on-going conflict in Iraq.

Schoolchildren, teachers, students and several politicians led by the Scottish Coalition for Justice Not War called for Prime Minister Tony Blair to rethink his policy.

Innocent

Their pleas were made hours after the first allied bombs fell on Baghdad.

Scottish Socialist Party leader for Dumfries, John Denis, hit out:

"This is a war about oil and putting the lives of innocent people at risk."

"Nobody is going to benefit from this conflict and it should be stopped before it is too late."

"Protests like this will carry on for weeks until the government starts listening."

Continued on page 4



● Former army officer John Charteris, right, takes a protester to task

Figure 9 – 'War Demo Clash' (Dumfries Courier, 21/03/2003)

DAVID MUNDELL MSP

(SOUTH OF SCOTLAND)



Mr H.B. Maxwell
29 Auchenkeld Avenue
Heathhall
Dumfries
DG1 3QY

February 2003

Dear Mr Maxwell

2003 SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Elections to the Scottish Parliament and Dumfries and Galloway Council are due to take place on **Thursday 1st May 2003**. Dumfries Constituency Conservatives are anxious that these elections are contested on the issues which are most important to local people and therefore, on their behalf, I would be grateful if you could take a minute or two to fill in the Opinion Survey printed overleaf.

From our previous surveys we know many people are concerned about the priorities of the new Scottish Parliament. Local people are particularly concerned about the Central Belt bias of the Parliament and the lack of attention it pays to rural areas like Dumfries and Galloway. Conservatives in the Scottish Parliament have consistently spoken out on important local issues such as jobs, the future of Chapelcross, the state of local roads, the difficulty in recruiting medical staff and dentists to the area, farming after Foot and Mouth Disease, and the future of services in rural areas more generally. However, we would appreciate hearing your views on the issues that you believe are the most important to you and your family.

Our feedback is that local people are also very disappointed by the performance of the current Council Administration. The Conservative Group is the Opposition on this Council and is well placed to lead the Council after this year's elections. The Conservative Group's aim is to deliver quality services, while keeping Council tax under control. Instead the Rainbow Alliance of Labour, SNP, Liberal Democrats and Independents that control the current Council Administration are getting involved in the disastrous projects such as the nonsensical school closure programme. Again your thoughts on the Council issues most important to you would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you in advance for taking the time and trouble to complete the survey. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'D Mundell'.

A3100/366

DAVID MUNDELL MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for the South of Scotland Region

DUMFRIES CONSTITUENCY CONSERVATIVES

41a Castle Street, Dumfries, DG1 1DU Tel: 01387 253449

Promoted by DCCA, 41a Castle Street, Dumfries, DG1 1DU & printed by Solway Offset, 11 Catherinefield Ind. Est., Heathhall, Dumfries DG1 3PQ

Figure 10 (a) – Local Opinion survey (front) for David Mundell MSP

LOCAL SURVEY

Opinion

Please take a few minutes to complete and return this survey form

Question 1. What do you regard as the most important issues in this year's Scottish Parliament elections?
[Please rank 1-7 with 1 as most important]

Education Health Care for the Elderly Law and Order Drugs
Roads & Transport Jobs Rural Services Other _____

Question 2. What do you regard as the most important issues in this year's elections to Dumfries and Galloway Council? [Please rank 1 – 7 with 1 as most important]

Schools State of Roads and Pavements Level of Council Tax Social Work
Leisure facilities Response to Litter and Dog Fouling Libraries Other.....

Question 3. Overall, how do you rate the current Dumfries and Galloway Council Rainbow Alliance Administration?

Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Average ☐ Poor ☐ Very Poor ☒

Question 4. What will influence most how you vote in the elections on 1 May 2003?

Party policies for Scotland ☐ Party policies for local area ☐ Party Leaders ☐ Local Candidates ☒

Question 5. How did you vote in the 1999 Scottish Parliament election?

Conservative ☐ Labour ☐ Lib-Dem ☐ SNP ☐ Other ☐ Didn't Vote ☐

Question 6. (a) How do you intend to vote in the Scottish Parliament elections on 1 May 2003?

Conservative ☐ Labour ☐ Lib-Dem ☐ SNP ☐ Other ☐ Won't Vote ☐

(b) How will you vote in the Council elections on the same day?

Conservative ☐ Labour ☐ Lib-Dem ☐ SNP ☐ Other ☐ Won't Vote ☐

Any other issues you would like to raise? (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

I would be interested in details on how to join the local Conservatives ☐

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it in the **FREEPOST** envelope provided.

In accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998, the information you give will be treated in the strictest confidence and the result of the survey will not be used in any way which could reveal the identity of an individual.

Figure 10 (b) – Local Opinion survey (back) for David Mundell MSP



CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY COUNCIL

Leader: Councillor Allan Wright

Phone: 01848 331 640 (home)

07786 902610 (mobile)

Email: allangw@bun.com

PRESS RELEASE

TORIES CLAIM VICTORY ON COUNCIL TAX

Conservative Councillors claimed victory for saving taxpayers in Dumfries and Galloway almost £4 million over the next three years. That is the difference between the ruling Rainbow Administration's original proposals to raise Council Tax by 4.9% compared with today's announcement of an increase of 3.6%, claimed Tory Opposition Group Leader **Allan Wright**.

He went on:

'There can be no doubt that our early commitment to freeze Council Tax at the rate of inflation forced the Administration to think again. For the Council to suggest otherwise is blatantly untrue.

'If the Administration did not intend to raise Council Tax by almost 5%, why did they allow the Chief Executive to tour the length and breadth of the region telling local people that they would? And why did Deputy Council Leader Joan Mitchell come out and publicly back the Chief Executive's claims such an increase was necessary?

'A cynic might suggest that all along the Administration knew Tory proposals were right and that two months before an election the people of Dumfries and Galloway would never wear another Council Tax hike. As such, the Administration understood it would have to play with smoke and mirrors to justify any inflation busting rise in Council Tax.

'But I am not a cynic, which leaves me in no doubt that the only reason why some semblance of common sense has prevailed on this occasion is because the Administration has caved into the arguments that the Conservatives have been making now for weeks.

'Only the Conservatives have been consistent on this issue. Our proposal to freeze Council Tax at the rate of inflation for the next three years was defeated today, although it would have saved local taxpayers an additional £2 million. That means Tory savings would have totalled £6 million.

'We believe that taxpayers in Dumfries and Galloway have paid more than enough. We therefore commit ourselves to freezing Council Tax next year at current levels if a Conservative Administration is elected in May.'

13 February 2003

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ALLAN WRIGHT ON 01848 331 640 (HOME)
07786 902610 (MOBILE)

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Cllr Allan Wright
Cllr Neil McKay
Cllr Allan Graham

Cllr Tony Gilbey
Cllr Ivor Hyslop
Cllr Lavinia Vaughan

Cllr Patsy Gilroy
Cllr Andrew Bell-Irving
Cllr Marjory McQueen

Figure 11 – Press release: 'Tories claim victory on Council Tax'

In Touch

Dumfries and Galloway Conservatives

**Safa
Ash-Kuri
for
Moffat**

Only The Conservatives Will Save Our Schools

The Council elections on 1st May is the last chance for local people to save our schools, says Conservative Candidate for the Moffat Ward, Safa Ash-Kuri.

"The Council Administration made up of Independent, Labour, Liberal Democrat and SNP Councillors have caused a nightmare of uncertainty for parents in Moffat and Beattock. After the disastrous so-called consultation meetings, the Council Administration is still not listening. If people don't make their views known at the elections, Beattock will close and there is no guarantee Moffat will keep an all through school.

"Only Conservative Councillors have repeatedly opposed these plans and if elected I am committed to keeping Beattock open and Moffat Academy as an all-through school."

Safa Ash-Kuri also wants an overhaul of the planning system and is determined to end the Council neglect of Moffat and Beattock. "It's not acceptable that our roads and footpaths are in such an appalling state, when Council Tax has been put up above the rate of inflation every year."



Conservative candidate for the Moffat Ward, Safa Ash-Kuri with David Mundell

Safa Ash-Kuri: Putting You First

If elected as the councillor for the Moffat Ward, Safa Ash-Kuri will pledge to:

Fight to keep Moffat Academy as an all-through school and save Beattock Primary from closure.

Ensure prompt and adequate maintenance to our roads and access ways and also address public transport issues.

Attend to environmental issues and devote sufficient time to address waste management concerns.

Safa Ash-Kuri - Working For Moffat Ward

Safa Ash-Kuri is a retired engineer and oil and gas executive, who spent much of his career with BP. He lives at Langshaw House in Beattock Road, Moffat, (Tel: 221739) with his wife Yvonne. They have three grown up children and are looking forward to the birth of their first grandchild.

Safa is active in many local organisations including the Wildlife Club, Probus, the Badminton Club, Golf Club and is a member of the Parish Council of St Luke's Church. He is a keen computer user and is campaigning to bring broadband to Moffat.

Labour, SNP and so-called Independants are in a coalition running the Council. "If like me", says Safa, "you want to change the Council, not just your Councillor, you must vote Conservative on 1st May."



Safa Ash-Kuri

Vote Safa Ash-kuri ☑ Time For A Change

Promoted by A MacLeod, on behalf of Safa Ash-Kuri, all at 41a Castle St, Dumfries, DG1 1DU. Printed by Solway Offset, 11 Catherinefield Ind Est, Heathhall, Dumfries, DG1 3PQ.

Figure 12 (a) – In Touch (front) for Safa Ash-Kuri

In Touch

It Doesn't Have To Be This Way

Only A Vote For The Conservatives Will Make A Difference

Dumfries and Galloway Council is currently run by a Rainbow Alliance comprising Labour, Liberal Democrat, SNP and so-called 'Independent' councillors, who act as a group to keep themselves in power.

This Administration does not listen to the views of the people of Dumfries and Galloway. The Conservative Opposition on the Council is the only group of councillors to have spoken out for local people against crazy Council schemes. However, it doesn't have to be this way. Your vote can make a difference!

Conservative Councillors are well placed to lead this Administration after the May elections. Only a Conservative run Council will listen to the people and will implement policies that benefit the whole of Dumfries and Galloway. So if you want change, you must vote Conservative!

Tories Will Stop The Chaos

It often seems that our elected representatives have surrendered responsibility to officials, leading to crazy schemes being launched and chaos created in our communities. We will:

- Save rural schools from closure
- Abolish the disastrous traffic management schemes in Dumfries
- Fix our roads, repairing potholes and maintaining a proper road gritting service during the winter
- Never repeat the mistake of proposing to build a new leisure complex on the Brooms Road Car Park in Dumfries
- Relax planning regulations to support small and rural businesses and regenerate our communities



Tories Pledge: 'We Will Freeze Council Tax'

Allowing Council Tax to spiral above inflation while services deteriorate is irresponsible. In a region where most people earn 7.5% less than the Scottish average, local people should not have to carry the burden of tax for the Council's incompetence. A Conservative Administration will:

- Freeze Council Tax at inflation
- Introduce full Council Tax on second homes
- Commence a 'root and branch' review of council spending to cut waste

Time For A Change ☒

Figure 12 (b) – *In Touch* (back) for Safa Ash-Kuri

In Touch

Dumfries and Galloway Conservatives

Change
the Council
Vote
Conservative!

The only way to change the Council is to vote Conservative!

Change the Council Vote Conservative!

Whether or not you would normally support us, if like thousands of other local people you are fed up with a Council Administration that never listens, the only way to change things is to vote Conservative.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is currently run by a Rainbow Alliance Administration comprising Labour, Liberal Democrat, SNP and so-called 'Independent' councillors, who act as a group to keep themselves in power.

The Conservative Opposition has been the only group of councillors to speak out for local people against crazy Council schemes and inflation busting Council Tax hikes.

Local Conservatives understand the mood for change shared by many local communities across our region. We

believe that every single person should have the opportunity to make a difference by voting for our positive agenda for change. That is why we have selected candidates to contest all 47 council wards across Dumfries and Galloway.

In what will be for many local people a referendum on the Council, **your vote could really make a difference.** Conservatives are well placed to lead this Council Administration after the May elections.

With your support, we can deliver change.

So remember, whether or not you would normally support us, the only way to change the Council is to vote Conservative on 1st May!

Dumfries and Galloway
Conservatives X

Graham Bell - Working For Maxwelltown

Dumfries-born **Graham Bell** is a 32-year-old local businessman with property and farming interests, who believes that "it's time for new blood on the Council, rather than the same tired old faces who are presiding over the decline of Dumfries."

Graham says, "I will give total commitment to the role of Councillor for Maxwelltown Ward. I will be accessible to you for personal visits and by holding regular surgeries. I will keep you in touch with what I'm doing by distributing local newsletters."

Graham Bell can be contact on 01387 253449



Graham Bell

Vote Graham Bell ☒

Time For A Change

Promoted and printed by A MacLeod, on behalf of Graham Bell, all at 41a Castle St, Dumfries, DG1 1DU.

Figure 13 (a) – *In Touch* (front) for Graham Bell

In Touch

Tories
condemn
huge Council
Tax hikes

Conservatives
will end
Dumfries
traffic chaos

Tories pledge
to save our
schools!

Change the
Council
Vote
Conservative

Stop decline of Dumfries

With the threat of closure hanging over Dumfries Academy and Maxwelltown High School, and reported crime and anti-social behaviour continuing to rise, the very future of Dumfries is at stake in the elections on 1st May.

The Town Centre desperately needs to be reinvigorated before it goes into terminal decline. Yet all the Council Administration can do is create chaos with more and more traffic lights, bus lanes and restrictions. And when they insisted on building a new leisure centre on the Brooms Road Car Park, the Council's proposals were only shelved after 11,600 people had signed a petition opposing them.

Other political parties have given up on Dumfries. Labour Party spokesmen recently conceded that they had run out of ideas when they flippantly suggested the Council should bulldoze the Vennel – even though it houses their own office!

The Conservatives are not prepared to stand by and watch Dumfries destroyed. The time for talking is over. The revival of Dumfries Town Centre must be made a priority.

Vote to change the Council. Vote Conservative.

Referendum on the Council

Do you want to change the Council?

Yes - Conservative	X
No - Labour	
No - Liberal Democrat	
No - SNP	
No - so-called 'Independent'	

Dumfries and Galloway
Conservatives **X**

Figure 13 (b) – *In Touch* (back) for Graham Bell

DUMFRIES CONSTITUENCY Rose

www.scottishlabour.org.uk



A lot done - More to do...

By Elaine Murray

In 1999 I was privileged to be elected as your first ever Member of the Scottish Parliament. Since then I've worked hard locally, helping thousands of people who have come to me with their concerns. And having a Labour led Scottish Government means I can take your problems to the very top.

A LOT DONE

Establishing the Scottish Parliament hasn't been easy and there have been disappointments - but there have been real achievements too. Nursery places for every three and four year old, free personal and nursing care, free bus travel for the elderly, new laws to seize the assets of drug dealers, the abolition of student tuition fees and record investment in our public services.

Some MSPs pretend to 'stand up' for the area by simply criticising from the sidelines, but in fact achieve nothing. I believe in being constructive.



Elaine and Scotland's First Minister Jack McConnell, listening to local people's views.

And that means working closely with local organisations such as the Council, Enterprise Company, Tourist Board and community groups - to put the needs of our community before party political bickering. Whether it was the successful campaign to secure funding to provide for disabled access at Lockerbie Station, or the successful campaign to oppose plans for a 10-hectare dump in Ae forest I have and always will, put my local community first.

MORE TO DO

But I know that there is so much more to do. I believe my job as your MSP is just beginning and on May 1st you will be given the opportunity to let Labour build on the foundations we have laid. My top priorities are to ensure we bring

more high quality jobs to the area, build on the investment we are seeing in local schools and hospitals and tackle crime, particularly drug related crime, with tougher sentences and more police on the beat. We need to shift the balance, not just by putting the victims of crime first, but also to protect ordinary decent families in their homes and on the street.

A LOT TO LOSE

Many people may believe that this election is not important and you may feel that it isn't worth voting. But the election here in Dumfries Constituency is going to be very close between Labour and the Tories. Your vote will make a real difference between having an MSP who will work hard for Dumfries Constituency, give you a voice at the heart of Scotland's Government and who will build on the start Labour has made. Or a Tory MSP who'll turn back the clock, cut spending in our schools and hospitals and weaken your voice in Parliament.

An MSP who has worked hard for the people of Dumfries Constituency

Since being elected in 1999 Elaine Murray has:

- Held over 250 advice surgeries in every part of the constituency including Dumfries, Ae Village, Beattock, Moffat, Ecclefechan, Lochmaben, Lockerbie, Canonbie, Langholm, Eskdalemuir, Annan, Eastriggs and Gretna.
- Visited hundreds of local community and voluntary groups and local businesses
- Backed a number of local campaigns such as the campaign for disabled access at Lockerbie Station and to protect Ae Forest from plans for a 10 hectare dump
- Dealt with over 10,000 letters
- And Elaine still finds time to give local people a voice at the heart of Scotland's Government in her role as Deputy Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport!



Elaine has visited and supported hundreds of community groups such as the Food Train

More teachers, more nurses, more police

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Figure 14 (a) – Labour Party Rose (front page) for Elaine Murray MSP

■ Safer, secure streets

Police numbers in Dumfries and Galloway have risen by almost 15% to 474 since 1997 and Labour will continue to increase this number, year on year, putting more police on the beat. The police also now have new powers to seize the assets of drug dealers. But that is just the beginning. Labour will introduce tougher sentences for drug dealers who target young people, and will crack down on anti-social behaviour, street crime, vandalism and litter.



Elaine and Local MP Russell Brown gathered support for their "Kick the Dealers Out" campaign



Elaine on a visit to the Royal Infirmary currently benefiting from extra investment

■ Dignity for older people

Elaine Murray has backed Labour's new measures to help local pensioners such as free central heating installation, free personal and nursing care and free local bus travel. Labour will build on the start we've made by extending the free central heating programme to include replacing outdated systems, initially for the over 80s and we will extend free off peak bus travel to include all bus travel nationwide, allowing free journeys to any part of Scotland, from Annan to Aberdeen, Dumfries to Dundee.



Elaine's pledge of free nationwide bus travel is just the ticket for local pensioners



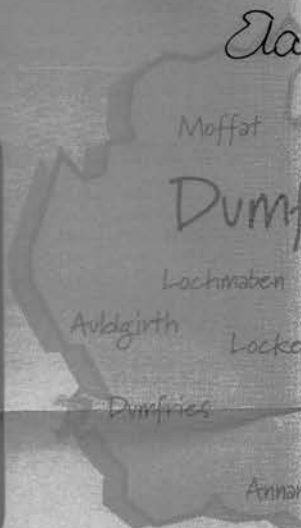
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■ Better Schools

Elaine Murray has campaigned vigorously for an end to leaking and crumbling school buildings, including fighting for a new Primary School in Heathhall and a new Academy and Primary School in Lockerbie. Thanks to a recent £100 million cash boost from the Labour-led Scottish Government, this will soon become a reality. Labour has also delivered a nursery place for every 3 & 4 year old locally and class sizes for all 5, 6 and 7 year olds have been cut to 30 or less. Labour will build on these achievements by cutting class sizes for Maths and English to under 20 in 1st and 2nd year in secondary schools. We will introduce bursaries to allow over 16s from low income families to stay on at school and we will continue to provide the investment needed for the Crichton University Campus to flourish.



As a parent and former lecturer, Elaine knows the importance of giving our kids a good education



Labour Investment v Tory Cuts

Have you ever wondered why Tory MSPs locally never talk about the Conservative Party's policies? What is it they are trying to hide? Well, Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith has pledged that if elected the Tories would make massive cuts in spending on local schools, hospitals and the fight against crime. He told the Daily Telegraph on 31 December that the Tories would cut spending by "20 percent across the board". That means cuts of £115 million alone in Dumfries and Galloway! While local Tory MSPs pretend to want more spending on local services, in the Scottish Parliament they always oppose Labour's measures to invest and improve public services and now they plan to cut that investment. The Tories must be the only people who think we need fewer doctors and nurses, fewer teachers and fewer police in Dumfries Constituency. Don't let the Tories take us back with cuts to schools and hospitals.

Figure 14 (b) – Labour Party Rose (inside, front) for Elaine Murray MSP

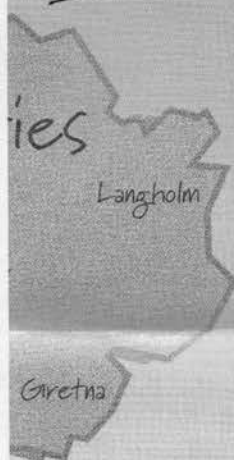


■ A modern health service

We are seeing some exciting new developments in the health service locally such as the new Maternity and Day Care Unit, the new casualty department and the soon to be built Oncology Unit at the Royal Infirmary. But Elaine knows more needs to be done. That is why Labour is committed to providing the investment needed to secure the future of all our local community hospitals including Langholm, Annan, Moffat and Lochmaben. Labour will cut waiting times for hospital appointments and ensure everybody is guaranteed an appointment with a GP, nurse or member of the local health team within 48 hours. Labour will also increase the number of doctors and nurses in the NHS - and provide the pay and conditions they deserve.

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s. Together we have
a start, but there is a lot
o do."

Elaine Murray



■ Putting Jobs first

Unemployment in Dumfries Constituency has plummeted by almost 50% since 1997. As a member of the Chapelcross Regeneration Group, Elaine Murray is committed to fighting to bring more jobs to the area. She is at the forefront of a campaign to ensure Dumfries Constituency benefits from Labour's plans to disperse government jobs outwith the central belt. Elaine has also fought to attract investment in local roads such as the A7, A75 and A76.

As a Tourism Minister in the Scottish Government, Elaine understands the importance of the industry to Dumfries Constituency and has worked hard to promote the area. Labour will build on these achievements, by providing more apprenticeships for young people and more support for small businesses to create local jobs.



Elaine visits Chapelcross with Russell Brown & UK Energy Minister Brian Wilson and pledges to fight for new jobs

Divorce is an Expensive Business

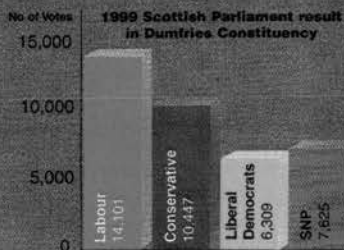


The UK is stronger together, weaker apart

The SNP ignore the close links Dumfriesshire has with Cumbria. With the Tories completely powerless to stop the SNP in Scotland, only Scottish Labour can ensure the SNP's plans to divorce Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom don't succeed.

- There is a £6 billion black hole at the heart of the SNP's plans to divorce Scotland from the rest of the UK. That would mean people in Dumfries Constituency paying more taxes than people in Cumbria.
- A vote for the SNP is a vote for constitutional wrangling and less teachers, less nurses and less police.
- The first act of an SNP Government would not be to improve schools or hospitals but to set up negotiations for divorce.
- The Scottish Parliament needs time to become established and grow. The last thing it needs is upheaval and yet more change.

Only Labour can keep the Tories out- Just look at the result the last time!



In 1999, we said only Labour could beat the Tories....and we were right. The election in Dumfries Constituency is a clear two horse race between Labour and the Tories.

The other parties are much too far behind-and their support is falling. The only way to be certain of keeping the Tories out of Dumfries Constituency is by voting to keep Elaine Murray as your MSP. The result will be very close, so make sure you use your vote. And make sure you use your vote for Scottish Labour.

Figure 14 (c) – Labour Party Rose (inside, back) for Elaine Murray MSP

Helping you...

It has been a great privilege to represent you over the last four years. If re-elected I make these pledges to you:

My pledges to you...

- 1 I will continue to work as a full-time local MSP-concentrating on helping local people.
- 2 I will continue to have a full-time, fully-staffed, accessible Constituency Office
- 3 I will continue to hold regular advice surgeries in every part of the Constituency.
- 4 Unlike, the SNP and Tory candidates I seek only to be an MSP for Dumfries Constituency. I will not seek to be elected by the 'back door' as a regional list MSP.
- 5 I will continue to work closely with local business and community groups.

...Helping us

Help Elaine Murray continue to deliver for the people of Dumfries Constituency. Fill in this form and send it to Elaine Murray, Scottish Labour Party, 5 Friars Vennel, Dumfries, DG1 2RQ or call Elaine's election hotline on 01387 279205 or email Elaine at elainemurray@email.labour.org.uk

Yes, I would like to help Elaine . . .

- ☐ Please register my support and send me a poster to display in my window
- ☐ I can deliver some leaflets or help in other ways
- ☐ I may need help getting to the polling station, please contact me

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Home tel: _____ Mobile tel: _____

E-mail: _____

For more information phone **01387 279205**

More teachers, more nurses, more police


Re-elect

Elaine Murray

May 1

More teachers, more nurses, more police

Scottish Labour
www.labour.org.uk



Election Communication
Dumfries Constituency

Elaine Murray

May 1

More teachers, more nurses, more police

Scottish Labour
www.labour.org.uk

Figure 14 (d) – Labour Party Rose (back page) for Elaine Murray MSP

Dumfries & Galloway Ward Information and Target Pledges								Target Pledges - Based on Estimated Turnout of 50% and GOTV of 80% C & 80% P		
WARD	Held By	Turnout	Majority	CANDIDATE	Electorates	Pledges "C"	Pledges "P"	Anticipated Pledges Voting	Target Pledges	To Find (with appt)
1) RHIBS SOUTH	Graham Foster (Lab)	64.87%	267	John Enns	2417	494	280	572	594	-43
2) RHIBS NORTH	John Agnew (Ind)	78.81%	123	John O'Dugan	2411	422	228	474	418	199
3) STRANRAER NORTH	Thomas Blount (Lab)	56.69%	288		2241	174	70	187	586	532
4) STRANRAER SOUTH	Willie Scobie (Lab)	62.97%	878	Mike Purcellson	2109	121	54	126	677	630
5) STRANRAER EAST	Robert Higgins (SNP)	61.84%	471	Maurice McKinstry	2304	441	348	559	578	22
6) LUCE	Fred Murray (SNP)	65.78%	378	Noberto Tuckfield	2494	502	281	579	624	71
7) WHITBURN	Alisdair Geddes (SNP)	65.11%	8		2394	164	216	581	590	24
8) WIGTOWN	Sandra McDermott (Lib Dem)	63.11%	91	Shelia Stewart	2120	260	779	616	562	-43
9) CRIZE	John Mitchell (Lib Dem)	64.00%	93		2148	629	248	651	638	-19
10) STEWARTRY WEST	Anthony Gilroy (Cons)	66.85%	91	Tony Gilroy	2274	493	315	672	509	-128
11) KIRKCOBRIGHT-TARFF	Patsy Gilroy (Cons)	66.75%	80	Patsy Gilroy	2381	488	772	634	588	-41
12) KIRKCOBRIGHT-BENGARIN	Jane Matheson (Ind)	78.39%	394		2381	498	351	609	595	-18
13) STEWARTRY NORTH	George Pringle (Ind)	67.48%	321	Graham Watson	2473	546	219	588	658	87
14) CASTLE DOUGLAS-BEE	Jack Purdie (SNP)	66.90%	38	Nigel Ryan	2348	363	216	419	587	273
15) CASTLE DOUGLAS-GIRK	Andrew Campbell (Ind)	79.87%	176		2489	529	232	559	622	84
16) DALBEATIE-CRAGHAR	Kathleen Davidson (SNP)	68.98%	28	Reneck Leitch	2201	379	136	365	595	229
17) DALBEATIE-MILTON	Yvonne Bell (Lab)	71.85%	489		2838	618	248	672	650	-17
18) CROFFEL	Michael Thomson (Ind)	66.98%	32	Brian Hodgson	2684	609	609	796	640	-16
19) CARR VALLEY	Alan Wright (Cons)	63.17%	95	Alan Wright	2468	393	221	687	618	11
20) SAMPSON & DISTRICT	James Dempster (Lab)	69.56%	47	Hugh Wright	2260	301	117	199	505	688

Figure 15 – Spreadsheet of Conservative Party target ‘pledges’

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